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Letter from the Founder

I believe in the irrefutable truth of this statement: that there are many great things in life, but by far the greatest are the smell of a British motorcycle engine sparked by an air-cooled parallel twin Amal carburettor on a cold, clear morning; the architectural miracle of the small of a woman's back; the ceaseless and undying affection of the miniature sausage dog; and the transportive power of rock 'n' roll. I mean *real* rock 'n' roll. Soul-blood-and-guts rock 'n' roll, which militates against the EDM Bieber-esque gibberish of much of today's music. If I sound like an old man, it's because I am. I was born in 1969, the year many of my favourite bands played Woodstock while people danced naked in the rain, high as kites on lysergic acid diethylamide.

I have existed long enough and lived through enough eras to recognise the good and the bad. Case in point: I know the immutable, self-evident truth that the 1990s New York grime-style period gave birth to the greatest artists of hip-hop, such as Nas, Wu-Tang Clan, Mobb Deep, and the immortal Christopher George Latore Wallace, otherwise known as the Notorious B.I.G., while the era of British rap in the early 2000s, which co-opted the name 'grime', was inferior by far. And I know the last truly great band still in their prime are the magnificent Rage Against the Machine, who go on tour this year. If God is kind, I shall be found in the pit reaching a state of nirvana-like transcendence while hurling my body against others and screaming, "Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me", a phrase I will dedicate to that most venal example of human scum, Vladimir Putin.

The Rake has always been a magazine about people who inspire us, edify us, and lift us up. Since I was a boy and first heard the opening refrain of Led Zeppelin's *Over the Hills and Far Away*, or the bongo drums that start the Rolling Stones' *Sympathy for the Devil*, I have loved rock 'n' roll and the men and women who have created it. But of the various characters to have populated rock 'n' roll lore, to have ridden their motorcycle down the hallways of Hollywood's Chateau Marmont, the individual I find most inspiring is Duane 'Skydog' Allman, of the Allman Brothers Band. He perished at 24, when his Harley-Davidson collided with the back of a peach truck, compelling his brother and band to name his posthumous masterpiece of an album *Eat a Peach*. But his time on Earth was well spent. According to legend, while working as a session musician at the famous FAME studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, Allman found himself recording with Otis Redding. The local taverns looked somewhat askance at the long-haired hippie musician types ensconced at the studio, and as such Allman stayed back and took it upon himself to rearrange the Beatles' *Hey Jude*, replete with an incendiary guitar break for himself at the end. Apparently, upon hearing him play, Aretha Franklin shouted out, "Someone get me that white boy". So unforgettable was Allman's brief but extraordinary performance on the song that when Eric Clapton heard it, he recruited him to play on *Layla*, resulting in the scorching, soaring paean that is considered one of the greatest guitar solos of all time. In 2019 the 1957 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop used by Allman to play Layla, as well as the first two Allman Brothers albums, sold at auction for $1.25m. My one regret is that I had not the means to purchase it.

So great is my affection for Duane Allman, I have decided that my first son must be named Skydog, a fact that is perhaps the reason for my inability thus far to find a woman who will bear my children. But compromise on this I cannot.

Meanwhile, whenever the subject of the greatest guitar solos comes up, I invariably mention Skydog and his acts of sonic alchemy on *Hey Jude*, *Whipping Post*, *Layla* or *Blue Sky*. For me it's either him or Mr. Double Trouble, the legendary Stevie Ray Vaughan, on *Texas Flood* or *Voodoo Child*. It might be considered rock 'n' roll blasphemy, but I prefer Vaughan's rendition of the latter to Jimi Hendrix's. So it was interesting to me that during dinner one night with Bryan Ferry and Nick Foulkes at Harry's Bar in London, Ferry should ask, "Have you seen Prince's performance at his induction to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame?" Ferry was referring to the night Prince jammed with Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne and Dhani Harrison on a rendition of *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*. For those of you who have not witnessed it, look it up on YouTube, wait until the 3:28 mark of the video, and prepare to stare transfixed at one of the greatest guitar performances ever recorded.

The point to all this is that rock 'n' roll is cathartic. It inspires, it makes us believe in genius, and it gives us hope that humanity is worth saving. In a world coming out of a two-year pandemic directly into the throes of an armed invasion in Europe, where we see all manner of evil perpetuated against an innocent nation by a megalomaniac, I feel we need rock 'n' roll — real soul-blood-and-guts music — more than ever.

—Wei Koh, Founder & Editorial Director
@wei_koh_revolution

RICHARD MILLE

RM 07-01

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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

When I was at school I was a keen dramatist. So keen, in fact, that I went on to do a degree in drama. I loved acting in school plays, and while *The Crucible* was my magnum opus (cf. our previous issue), the first lead role I picked up was Orsino in *Twelfth Night*. I was dressed in silver and gold and really hammed it up, probably too much (there is a video of it somewhere). Anyway, even after all these years, I still remember the opening soliloquy, which starts with the famous line, "If music be the food of love, play on". In those days, my music tastes were susceptible to peer pressure, which is why, as well as Shakespeare, I can also still recall the words to Slipknot's *Wait and Bleed*.

The journey from there to being a classical music devotee is convoluted, but we are where we are. I cannot play a note of music (nor sing one, for that matter), but I have always been able to feel every single one in a way that people 'feel' art. Whether or not I can spot a *tierce de Picardie* or diminished seventh has no bearing on whether it has the capacity to tap into my serotonin levels. The good vibes one derives from music perhaps explains why this issue of *The Rake* is dedicated to the form.

That being said, we have not, you might be glad to hear, restricted ourselves to classical music. In fact, we have drawn on jazz, rock 'n' roll, blues, classical and new wave. Talking of which, we kick off the issue with Duran Duran, where punk edginess was brushed off for something more enigmatic and stranger. The video for *Rio*, shot on the Eilean, a beautiful yacht owned by Panerai, gave us a band of sartorial practitioners playing with pastel colours typical of the era. Our Follow Suit column focuses on the Chicago blues player Howlin' Wolf, a feature written by James Medd, who has also picked out the finest guitarists of all time who may not always feature in *Rolling Stone*'s top 10.

There is an abundance of brilliant talent outside of music featured in this issue. Our cover star is the modern matinee idol James Marsden. We checked in with the *Westworld* actor in Los Angeles to discuss the cinema landscape now that vaccines have been administered and mask mandates largely waived. Scott Harper speaks to Andy Serkis, who is one of the most influential men in modern cinema. After bursting onto the scene as Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*, Serkis's roles have been many and varied, from live action in *Black Panther* to, most recently, Alfred in *The Batman*. However, he often goes incognito and defers to his motion-capture workshop, The Imaginarium, which has been used in the *Avengers, Star Wars* and *Planet of the Apes* franchises. This was one of three shoots carried out by the marvellous and cinematically minded Charlie Gray, who has also photographed the issue's chief fashion feature as well as our collaboration with Audemars Piguet to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Royal Oak watch.

In a special piece for this issue, we have teamed up with Ralph Lauren to showcase their latest collection, which has been inspired by the traditions of Morehouse and Spelman colleges, the prestigious, historically Black universities in the U.S. The collection is about heritage and excellence, and is a beautiful tribute to the standards of these elite institutions.

Elsewhere, I embarked on another bespoke adventure with Lorenzo Cifonelli and Vitale Barberis Canonico. The VBC mill in Biella, Italy, sent a length of teal flannel and encouraged me to experiment, so I turned to a creative mind far superior to mine — Cifonelli — and we produced an extraordinary sports jacket that is as striking as it is elegant.

While this is an issue of *The Rake* dedicated to music, everything in these pages is intended to serve as the food of love. We realise that our coverage is insignificant and peripheral when all our eyes have been turned to the horrors unfolding in Eastern Europe. Yet if love conquers all, we must play on. Love, after all, is a verb — it is something you do — so let us conquer together.

— Tom Chamberlin, Editor-in-Chief
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KIM LANG

STILE LATINO

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Contributors

Charlie is a London-based international fashion and portrait photographer known for his playful, cinematic and intimate images. He is inspired by past photography masters Richard Avedon and Terry O'Neill and filmmakers Martin Scorsese and Michael Mann. Charlie has become a regular in these pages, but never more so than in this issue, for which he has contributed three shoots. He worked with us on

CHARLIE GRAY

our collaboration with Audemars Piguet (page 86), harnessing his environment's colour and texture to produce images that are dynamic and exciting; profiled the British actor and director Andy Serkis at the Rosewood hotel in London (page 106); and created our Main Fashion feature — 'Me and My Rock 'n' Roll Queen' — on page 130.

Danny is a Ugandan-British photographer and director from London. He pursued his interest in film and television by switching from a finance degree to film studies before beginning his first year at college, and while sharpening his skills as a filmmaker and winning a Royal Television Society award for student cinematography, he developed an interest in fashion and photography. His background in film

DANNY KASIRYE

heavily influences the way he forms a still image, and always he aims to bring a sense of purity, joy and beauty in its many varieties. In 2020 he became one of the winners of the British Journal of Photography's Portrait of Britain awards. For this issue of *The Rake*, Danny captured the extraordinary collaboration between Ralph Lauren and Morehouse College (page 116).

Kurt, a photographer born in the blue-collar creative breeding ground of Akron, Ohio, and raised in Argentina and Mexico, was influenced by the eclectic cultural and geographical contrasts he experienced as he travelled as a young boy. He picked up a camera for the first time while working as a lighting technician on film sets in Hollywood, and his cinematic eye found its niche working within the static frame.

KURT ISWARIENKO

Known for drawing emotional narrative performances from his subjects, and a visually sculpted lighting style, Kurt has photographed everyone from Oprah Winfrey to Brad Pitt, and created media campaigns with a number of diverse brands. During the pandemic he adapted his process to produce still and motion projects remotely, logging more than 40 such shoots in 2020. Kurt shot James Marsden for this issue's cover and accompanying story (page 70).

Alessandra is a writer living in Los Angeles. The former Style Director of *Departures* magazine and editor at *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Women's Wear Daily*, she is a fan of what she calls "hotels that get it right, which is harder than you think". She reviewed The Maybourne Beverly Hills (page 154) for this issue, and checked in with her eight-year-old Golden Retriever, Hugo. "There were many highlights of our stay

ALESSANDRA CODINHA

at The Maybourne," she says, "including an ultra-private whisky and cigar bar that's unlike anything else I've seen in Beverly Hills. But it was really The Maybourne's staff that set the hotel apart — they went above and beyond." And as for Hugo's review? "The homemade dog biscuits in everyone's pockets and the in-room dog-food menu were seriously clever touches."

cover photographer ***kurt iswarienko***
stylist ***ilaria urbinati***

Cashmere overcoat, Prince of Wales check double-breasted blazer, roll-neck sweater, all **Brioni**.

THE RAKE

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FOUNDER & EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
Wei Koh

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & HEAD OF BRAND
Tom Chamberlin

ART DIRECTOR
Rob French

CHIEF SUBEDITOR
Stephen Wood

FASHION DIRECTOR
Grace Gilfeather
grace@therakemagazine.com

ART EDITOR
Kim Lang

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER
Brandon Hinton
brandon@therakemagazine.com

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE
Freddie Anderson
freddie@therakemagazine.com

DIGITAL IMAGING ARTIST
Kok Haw Koh

MRS RAKE
Eleonor Picciotto

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Nick Foulkes

RAKE AMBASSADOR
Matteo Mangu

SARTORIAL CONSIGLIERE
Shary Rahman

SARTORIAL GURU
Christopher Modoo

RAKE
Bazadi

RAKE HOUNDS IN VALHALLA
Brando & Gracie Koh

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GETTY IMAGES

THE RAKE

THE RAKE PTE LTD

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Alain Gafundi
alain@therakemagazine.com

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
Maria Lim
maria@therakemagazine.com

GROUP FINANCIAL CONTROLLER
Gin Poh Lau
ginpoh@revolutionmagazines.com

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Ismaïl Rafaï
ismail@therakemagazine.com

PRODUCT UPLOAD MANAGER
Lewis Angus
lewis@therakemagazine.com

PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVE
Hassani Abdullahi
hassani@therakemagazine.com

MARKETING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Baptiste Rosset
baptiste@therakemagazine.com

OPERATIONS MANAGER
Andrea Zanardo
andrea@therakemagazine.com

PRODUCT MANAGER
Sam Basir
sam@therakemagazine.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER
Emily Bennett
emily@therakemagazine.com

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER
Yvonne Koh

INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC COORDINATOR
Christina Koh
christina@revolutionmagazines.com

E-COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT PARTNER
Hatimeria

RETAIL MANAGER, FARI ISLANDS
Jimi Williamson
jimi@therakemagazine.com

STORE MANAGER, FARI ISLANDS
Guste Maziliauskaite
guste@therakemagazine.com

Internationally Licensed Editions

THE RAKE JAPAN CO. LTD
PUBLISHER
Shigetoshi Oshiro
oshiro@therakejapan.com

THE RAKE JAPAN CO. LTD.
JAPAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Kentaro Matsuo
matsuo@therakejapan.com

THE RAKE MIDDLE EAST
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APP
Sue Holt
sue.holt@itp.com

SHUTTERSTOCK

arbiter

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GETTY IMAGES

THE OLD ROMANTICS

It took them a while — and certainly longer than they'd have liked — but 40 years after the release of the classic album Rio, Duran Duran have forged a legacy that bears comparison with some of their eighties brothers.

by ***stuart husband***

On May 10, 1982, Duran Duran released their second album. The thrusting, Thatcherite eighties had barely got going, but *Rio* already seemed the decade's aspirational apogee. There was the title, with its whiff of sun-kissed exotica. There was the vivid purple cover, with its study of a slinky siren by the *Playboy* illustrator Patrick Nagel. And there were the songs, from the title track's lush carnival hedonism to *Hungry Like the Wolf*'s unabashed I-want-it-all covetousness. It spawned three monster hit singles and went double platinum in the U.S., making Duran Duran the spearhead of what was swiftly branded the 'second British invasion'. They had legions of devoted fans, known as Durannies. They had the world at their feet. And yet the press was resolutely unmoved. "Anglodisco at its most solemnly expedient," thundered *The Village Voice*. "Bereft of the soul, passion and wit that makes a great record," declared *Record Mirror*. Even I, then working for a weekly pop glossy, felt obliged to get in on the act. "Duran could churn out this kind of thing in their sleep," I snarked of *Save a Prayer* or possibly *Is There Something I Should Know?* "Pity they're not insomniacs."

"It got a bit dull and worthy after punk. We wanted to bring in some glam elements, some Studio 54 flash."

In retrospect, it's easy to see why critical opprobrium rained down on Duran Duran. They seemed like gauche arrivistes compared to their peers: they came from Birmingham, for a start, which has always seemed fated to put the 'second' into second city, and they lacked Culture Club's pansexual cachet or the Blitz-sanctioned and be-kilted swagger of Spandau Ballet. Simon Le Bon seemed far too cherubic and puppy-like to be a frontman, too eager, despite acing his audition in a pair of pink leopard-print pants; Nick Rhodes had the eyeliner and the backcombed highlights, but, parked behind his Roland, he resembled a kind of flat-pack David Sylvian; and the remaining trio consisted of people named Taylor who didn't even have the merit of being related. Their avowed intent was to be "a cross between Chic and the Sex Pistols", according to bassist John Taylor, but you would never have found the latter being so *de trop* as to namecheck punk in their songs in the way that Duran (who'd got their name from Milo O'Shea's character Durand Durand in the camp sci-fi schlocker *Barbarella*) referenced the 'new romantic' in their debut single *Planet Earth*. "It had all got a bit dull and worthy after punk," Le Bon told *Vogue* last year. "We wanted to bring in some glam elements, some funk, some Studio 54 flash... a bit of excess, you know?"

The latter quality was most strikingly apparent in the videos the band produced to accompany the *Rio* singles, which landed just as MTV was achieving global ascendancy. They'd already courted notoriety with the banned clip for *Girls on Film*, a Godley & Creme-helmed softcore fantasia of naked women pillow fighting and mud wrestling; now they decamped to Antigua and Sri Lanka with the director Russell Mulcahy for the full widescreen treatment. That meant a 70-foot yacht, pastel silk suits and feather-cuts for *Rio* ("Her name is Rio and she dances on the sand... ") and elephants, palm-fringed bays, thronging souks, and Indiana Jones panamas for *Save a Prayer* and *Hungry Like the Wolf* ("Stalked in the forest, too close to hide... "). The band may have long since demurred at the perceived excess — the whole Sri Lankan episode cost them only 20 grand; drummer Roger Taylor was left helplessly clinging to a lusty elephant as he charged off to seek a mate; and guitarist Andy Taylor fell out of a tree into a lagoon and got poisoned — but the resultant images were so striking, as the *Los Angeles Times* wrote many years later, that "people began to think a typical day for Duran Duran involved a yacht and a model in body paint". They were labelled 'a video band', a triumph of bombast over bona fides. "It was quite annoying for a while, that we were pigeonholed like that," Le Bon said.

Turbo-charged by their heavy-rotation ubiquity, Duran now entered their grandiloquent phase: the five nights at Hammersmith

From left: Roger Taylor, Simon Le Bon, John Taylor, Andy Taylor and Nick Rhodes in New York in 1981.

Top: Duran Duran in London in the 1980s.

Bottom: Meeting Princess Diana at the Dominion theatre during the Prince's Trust Rock Gala in London in 1983.

GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK

Andy Taylor, second from left, and his wife, Tracey, with members of Duran Duran during their wedding at Chateau Marmont in Los Angeles, 1982.

Odeon, the mounted police and blocked-off streets at in-store appearances, the ear-splitting screams that soundtracked their lives. Their singles went straight in at No.1; the lyrics, courtesy of Le Bon, veered between galumphing metaphors ("Don't make it easy on me/You're about as easy as a nuclear war", from *Is There Something I Should Know?*) and lines that could have spouted from a random surrealism generator ("Shake up the picture the lizard mixture with your dance on the eventide", from *New Moon on Monday*). Princess Diana declared them her favourite band, which seemed only to confirm their status as incorrigibly vanilla. They dated alpha females: the supermodel Yasmin Parvaneh in Le Bon's case, the former 'wild child' and T.V. presenter Amanda de Cadenet in John Taylor's (Le Bon is now a grandfather; Taylor went on to marry Gela Nash, the co-founder of Juicy Couture). They spent a lot of time in New York, where Andy Warhol developed a serious crush on Nick Rhodes. They even recorded a Bond theme: fittingly, *A View to a Kill* coincided with one of the franchise's occasional forays into sheer camp (it was Roger Moore's swan song, and co-starred Grace Jones as a pneumatic henchwoman named May Day). It remains the only Bond theme to have topped the U.S. charts, and it was further immortalised when the band played the song during the American leg of Live Aid in Philadelphia and Le Bon hit what has since become known as "the bum note heard around the world". By this time, in any case, the tensions inherent in the band's music — John and Andy Taylor's preference for rocking out, Le Bon and Rhodes's more esoteric electronica strivings — had cleaved them in two, with the Taylors going off to form The Power Station with dad-funk stalwart Robert Palmer, and the singer and keyboardist joining forces in the art-rock ensemble Arcadia. Neither, it's fair to say, set the world alight, and Duran Duran looked moribund at best.

"The eighties had ended and people were ready to lock us up and throw away the key. There wasn't space for us."

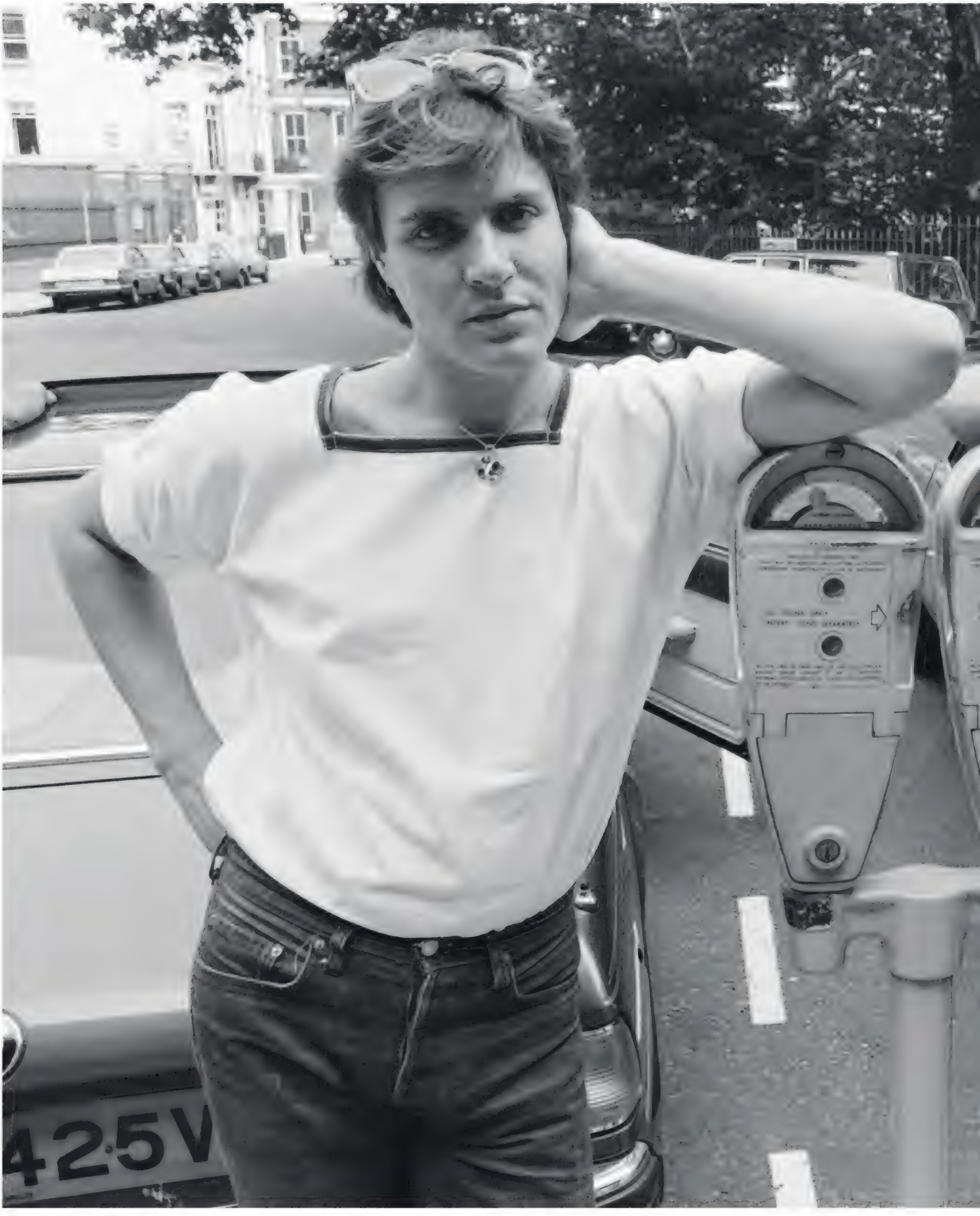
Then something remarkable happened. The band shaved off two burnt-out Taylors — Roger and Andy — and returned in 1992 with a song called *Ordinary World*, which was... really good. The tone was bittersweet — elegiac, even ("I won't cry for yesterday/ There's an ordinary world/Somehow I have to find," Le Bon sang in a lower, wryer register). It was an expression of acceptance, even possibly relief, at their fall from superstardom. "It was a funny time," Rhodes later told *The Guardian*, "because the eighties had ended and people were ready to lock us up and throw away the key. We didn't want to jump on a rave bandwagon and certainly didn't want to jump on a grunge bandwagon. There wasn't a lot of

10 Palm Springs.

Clockwise from top left: Duran Duran in Los Angeles, circa 1980; a studio photograph in 1981, from left: Rhodes, Andy Taylor, Le Bon, John Taylor and Roger Taylor; bass guitarist John Taylor poses in L.A. in 1987; and Le Bon leans against a bar with John Taylor reflected in the mirror in London, 1983.

GETTY IMAGES

Clockwise from top left: Fran Lebowitz with Nick Rhodes at the Factory in New York, 1990; John Taylor with Amanda de Cadenet and Billy Idol in London, 1990; Steve Norman, of Spandau Ballet, with Roger Taylor and his wife, Giovanna Cantone, at a party in London, 1984; Roger Taylor, John Taylor, Andy Taylor and Nick Rhodes photographed in the U.S., 1984; Le Bon and his wife, Yasmin, at a book launch party at the Factory in New York, 1990; and Rhodes with his girlfriend at a charity event in Beverly Hills in 1999.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Simon Le Bon and Roger Taylor in London, August 1981.

GETTY IMAGES

Clockwise from top left: Le Bon with Billy Idol in London in 1993; John Taylor and Le Bon on stage; the Duke of Cambridge meets Rhodes, John Taylor and Le Bon at Centrepoint's 50th anniversary gala in London in 2019.

GETTY IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK

The band perform live during the Austin City Limits festival at Zilker Park in Austin, Texas, in 2021.

space left for us. So we decided that the only voice we had was our songs, and we went away, and we wrote and wrote."

Duran Duran had loosened up. Over the next couple of decades, their determination to stick to their guns yielded more pop-funk classics like *Come Undone* and *(Reach Up for the) Sunrise*; finally, they could be mentioned in the same breath as their own idols — Roxy Music, David Bowie, Kraftwerk — without flinching. By the time the original line-up played a triumphant homecoming gig at Birmingham's St. Andrews stadium in 2005, they'd not only long outlived their erstwhile peers, who'd either imploded amid internecine feuds or dwindled to nostalgia-tour irrelevance, but also found their earlier work reassessed. Their songs had always been ear worms, but now the stuttering synth line on *Save a Prayer* sounded poignant rather than mawkish, and even *The Wild Boys*, while a long way from William Burroughs, carried a certain outlaw bravado. The videos, too, seemed ripe for reappraisal, and the journalist and critic Annie Zaleski duly obliged, in a book-length dissection of *Rio* that was published as part of Bloomsbury's *33 1/3* series. "The band members weren't jaded jet-setters but hopeful dreamers," she wrote. "The cosmopolitan and escapist vibe permeating *Rio* is rooted in sincerity and earnestness."

Duran Duran had loosened up. Their determination to stick to their guns yielded more pop-funk classics.

Four decades after the release of *Rio*, Duran Duran's attitude to their legacy and their place in the pop firmament can best be gauged by the video for *Anniversary*, a euphoric banger taken from their recent (15th) album, *Future Past*. Directed by the acclaimed photographic deep-faker Alison Jackson, the clip features a bunch of lookalike luminaries spanning Duran's own timeline — Elton John, Pamela Anderson, Madonna, Daniel Craig, Kim Kardashian, Billie Eilish, even Queen Elizabeth II — partying hard while facsimile versions of the young, callow Duran in their Antony Price pomp entertain them; their venerable equivalents look on with fond indulgence while holding court in immaculate Saint Laurent tuxedos (Rhodes, of course, flourishes a cape). See, they seem to be saying, if you wait long enough, it all kind of falls into place. Even the critics have long since capitulated. "A romp of a record," said Tom Ewing in Pitchfork on the occasion of *Rio*'s 2009 reissue. And me? Given the fact that I'm often found humming *Notorious* or *My Own Way* rather than, say, *Church of the Poison Mind* or *Chant No. 1*, I'd like to amend my earlier verdict: Duran could churn out this sort of thing in their sleep. May they never succumb to insomnia.

‘IT CAN BE EASY TO BE CYNICAL … BUT ART SHOULD BE A CALL TO ARMS’

The classical actor James McArdle talks to **THE RAKE** *about the value of performance in our injurious world — and finding virtue in the world of Disney.*

by **chris cotonou** *photography* **kim lang** *fashion direction* **veronica perez** *special thanks to* **Corinthia London**

James McArdle’s intimidating reputation precedes him. It’s not that in person there’s anything intimidating about the Glaswegian actor: indeed, he is warm, witty and thoughtful. But his reputation as a thespian (of the classical kind, which seems increasingly rare) is of a magnitude that occasions awe when I mention his name to those who follow his work.

His accolades — from the Laurence Olivier award (previous winners include Chiwetel Ejiofor and Mark Rylance) to the Ian Charleson award — are proof enough that his acting talent does not go unnoticed. “It’s nice to be recognised,” he says via Zoom while on a break in Florida. “But it’s barely an afterthought when I am preparing for a role.”

In April, McArdle stars in the anticipated television adaptation of Kate Atkinson’s novel Life After Life. He is also preparing for a number of theatre performances (his first love) and, perhaps unexpectedly, to play a character in an unnamed Disney series. “It’s going to be a different kind of challenge,” he admits, ruminating on possible franchise stardom. But fame has never really tempted McArdle. “My decision to take a role depends on whether I fall in love with the script,” he says. “That’s what matters to me — a good story, be it William Shakespeare or a blockbuster franchise.”

Is it true you don’t use social media?
It is. Not because I have an agenda, I just missed the boat the first time around. I definitely wouldn’t want to now, either. From the outside, everyone seems to spend so much time on their phones, and it has replaced natural communication. It’s true that having social media helps as an actor today, but it shouldn’t be necessary. I don’t like to broadcast my life. I even feel strange doing interviews.

In Life After Life, where do you find common ground with your character, Hugh?
It’s true you need something personal to cling to as an actor, and for me, that was his understanding that family is everything. My own family will probably laugh if they read me saying that, but it is something I’m learning — especially being in an industry that doesn’t always return the love. I played Hugh from age 25 to 65, and I really enjoyed that challenge. The director, John Crowley, has a theatre background, and he trusted me to take the character where I wanted. It was one of my favourite projects, and also the one I’m most excited to see released.

You have an enviable collection of accolades. To what extent do you strive to win awards as an actor?
It’s always nice to be recognised for my work, but it’s not a driver for me. When I went to New York to do *Angels in America*, I discovered how much of a big deal it was. They have an awards season, and regular events at the big hotels. I mean, I’ve never been in Glenda Jackson’s presence so much in my life [laughs]. It’s bizarre. It’s important for the industry, but an afterthought when I accept a role. Some people focus on the awards, and I envy them that. I wouldn’t be able to put that extra pressure on myself.

How important is it to trust your gut instinct?
As I get older, I’m learning just how necessary it is. When you’re a young man, you seem to simply act rapidly and naively. Now I’m more careful with what roles I accept. It’s the first time in 10 years I don’t have a play on the horizon. My gut is telling me that taking a break is the right thing to do… but that’s still terrifying, you know?

You ran away to London at 17 years of age. Can you describe the experience?
It was a really big reality bump, arriving in the city. I thought, Oh, my goodness… this is expensive! But it wasn’t my first time. I was lucky to be taken there at an earlier age by PACE, my theatre school in Paisley [in Scotland], of which I’m now a patron. Being exposed to that culture early on helped me realise my ambitions on the stage. I mean, I was watching *Coriolanus* at the RSC at 14. It was a dream. I still remember that grand stadium feeling in the Olivier [part of the National Theatre], and then how it felt to perform there.

How important are mentors in the theatre?
Very important. At various stages of my career I’ve had people who have guided me and my decisions. I would mention [theatre

Brown wool single-breasted jacket, **Brioni**; beige linen shirt, **Vilebrequin**; brown silk paisley tie, **Drake's**; charcoal flannel trousers, **Anderson & Sheppard**; moss-green canvas and leather side-by-side weekend bag, Havana 48-hour full oak bark leather bag and London Tan 48-hour full oak bark leather bag, all **Purdey**; rose-gold Patrimony self-winding watch with dark brown alligator leather strap, **Vacheron Constantin**.

Opposite page:
Grey wool double-breasted suit, **Brunello Cucinelli**; coral linen shirt, **Budd Shirtmakers**.

Pocket-square, *property of The Rake*.

This page:
Pink wool single-breasted jacket, **Richard James**; petrol brushed cotton shirt, **Budd Shirtmakers**; black-and-white silk checked tie, **Ralph Lauren Purple Label**.

Rose-gold Traditionnelle Complete Calendar with brown alligator strap, **Vacheron Constantin**.

Pocket-square, *property of The Rake*.

director] Jonathan Kent, who I've worked with on five or six plays. I was also trained by Bill Gaskill, who was a titan of British theatre. He was from a different generation, when the theatre was led by actors and writers. They knew how to push and mould me as a performer, but it is all about the 'auteur director' now. They have their own brand of vision that you're expected to fit into. I can't say I quite get it.

You performed in Angels in America on Broadway. How do you manage an eight-hour performance?

I honestly don't know. I certainly didn't stay sane. Every single element of it was intense, and the scale of the show was huge. I was so lucky to get to do it, to be in New York, and I am most grateful for my long speech. As an actor, you learn how to be laser sharp in those moments. That's the difference between the screen and stage. In film, you have to understand how your performance will be edited after. But in theatre, you are doing the editing in real time.

You're starring in an upcoming Disney franchise series. What inspired you to move into that form of entertainment?

I can't mention his name as of now, but it was the director. I understand these franchises have a certain reputation, but I've always loved his work, and so I jumped at the idea to learn from him. People can be dismissive about this sort of media, but when the script came through, I called my agent and said, "This is really well written". For me, it's always the writing. I don't mind whether the story is fantastical or highbrow — as long as the writing is good, that's theatre. That's enough for me.

Is there something you've learned recently, or would like to learn?

I wanted to have time off acting after *Angels* to focus on writing. After *Mare of Easttown* and *Macbeth*, I asked my writing partner, Linzi, to teach me how to cook. My go-to is butternut squash, with beetroot and quinoa. If I get bored, she tells me to pretend I'm presenting a T.V. show. It's a joke, of course, but it does kind of help. When I tell her I can't make something, she says, "Nonsense. If you had a role as a chef, you would learn to cook." And she's right. That's a perk of acting, always learning things. It's only keeping it up afterwards that's tricky.

Where do you find artistic purpose in an increasingly cynical world?

You're right. Sometimes it's depressing. In the current climate we're in, art and the sciences feel politicised and denigrated. It can be easy to get cynical. But on the other hand, art has never been more relevant. It's easier for me to find a reason to accept roles now. I'm in discussions to do two or three classic plays, and the urgency, my desire to do them, is red hot. That's how I feel. Art should be a call to arms.

Opposite page:
Green and gold Sohal paisley unlined silk dressing gown, **New & Lingwood**.

This page:
Cream and peach linen shirt, **Richard James**; pink cotton T-shirt, **Vilebrequin**; grey cotton trousers, **Brunello Cucinelli**.

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This page:
Indigo denim double-breasted jacket and indigo denim shirt, both **Brioni**; navy cashmere crew-neck knit, **Connolly**; red cotton printed pocket-square, **Cifonelli x The Rake**; blue linen trousers, **Anderson & Sheppard**; rose-gold Patrimony Perpetual Calendar ultra-thin watch with dark blue alligator leather strap, **Vacheron Constantin**.

Opposite page:
Navy cotton blend embroidery suit, **Giorgio Armani**; pink cotton T-shirt, **Vilebrequin**; blue cotton polkadot pocket-square, **Calabrese 1924**; tobacco cotton socks, **London Sock Company**; dark pearl grey patina leather shoes, **Gaziano & Girling**.

FASHION ASSISTANT: AMELIA HUDSON
PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT: DERRICK KAKEMBO
GROOMING: JOE MILLS

Howlin' Wolf, circa 1970.

RUNNING WITH WOLF

The music of the Chicago bluesman Chester Burnett retains its magnetism and vitality nearly 50 years after his death. You might know him better as Howlin' Wolf.

by ***james medd***

Whatever way you look at him, Howlin' Wolf was a towering figure. At 6ft 3in and built to match, he was a seriously imposing presence, employing his physicality on stage to create a sense of authority and even threat. As a singer, his hoarse growl gave his performances an authority and drama that made them impossible to ignore. Though he dressed in sober suit and tie, his hair neatly clippered, he gave no doubt that he meant business. Even on record, the impression was the same: this was a man who could steal your woman and do you damage, and who had seen and felt things you never would.

His influence was equally heavy. British bands such as the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin formed their sound in emulation not only of his music but his charisma and mystique. Jimi Hendrix took his approach as a template, Iggy Pop harnessed his brutality, Captain Beefheart and later Tom Waits borrowed his voice, Nick Cave his darkness and mystery. And what attracted them remains as powerful as ever: listen to the astonishing, elusive *Smokestack Lightnin'* and you feel the same magnetism, the timeless feeling of longing and discontent, of experience just beyond your grasp, delivered directly, as fresh and vital as anything music has thrown up in the 60 years since.

Hendrix took Wolf's approach, Iggy Pop his brutality. Tom Waits borrowed his voice, Nick Cave his mystery.

All the same, we might never have heard him. Even by the standards of the great bluesmen, recognition of his talent came late, when he was well into his forties, and partly through his own fault. For such an innovator, he was slow to seize his opportunity. Born Chester Burnett in 1910 in Mississippi, he took up the guitar at the age of 10 and picked up songs from fellow plantation workers who also happened to be the giants of Delta blues, including Charley Patton and Robert Johnson. He played in bars and on the streets but remained a farm labourer until after the war, when mechanisation meant field work was harder to find. By then he'd made a reputation for himself, and had also worked his way through a series of stage names. Bull Cow and Big Foot eventually gave way to Howlin' Wolf, a title for which he gave several shaggy-dog explanations but which surely came from his take on the yodel of country pioneer Jimmie Rodgers.

Once he'd taken up music full-time, touring with an electric band, he was noticed by the white-led music companies that had sprung up after the war. His first sessions were at Sun in Memphis, where the resident producer, Sam Phillips, later to foster the rise of Elvis and rock 'n' roll, recalled him as the greatest talent he encountered. From there he headed to Chicago and the Chess label, where, with Muddy Waters and others, he spearheaded what became known as Chicago blues. Loud and lively, perfect for dancing or carousing, this form was hugely popular with black audiences and then, as their attention fell away, with a new audience of white teenagers.

His first recordings, including the eerie *Moanin' at Midnight* and the rampaging *How Many More Years*, as well as *Smokestack Lightnin'*, had been full of bad times, trouble done and suffered, and all the restlessness of the blues. At the turn of the sixties, though, he recorded a set of songs by the bassist Willie Dixon that focused on sexuality, sly innuendo married perfectly to his growled delivery and the drive and precision of his band. These songs, the grind and leer of *Back Door Man* or the filthy groove of *Spoonful*, were, as his great guitarist Hubert Sumlin said, "us trying to get as low-down and dirty as we could". But they were also as irresistible as any pop song.

Their accessibility gave him a new lease of life. The Rolling Stones borrowed his *Little Red Rooster* and insisted he appear with them on the T.V. music show *Shindig!*, with guitarist Brian Jones introducing him as "one of our greatest idols". For these scrawny English boys, exposed to his music on imported discs and via historians of American folk music, he was a link to a romanticised past, but Howlin' Wolf was no throwback. While many of the Delta bluesmen he had known were being given a lap of honour long after their glory days, he was at his peak, making music that carried the spirit of the blues into new areas. As a bandleader, he created a unique sound, pushing his two guitarists to play against each other, building an intensity that was all his own.

He was also a spectacular showman. While most of his filmed performances from later years show him seated and

Clockwise from top left: **Recording with Eric Clapton at Olympic Studios in London, circa 1970; at a blues festival at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester; at home in 1970; at Hunter College in New York in 1971; and posing for the photographer Joel Brodsky at Hunter College in 1971.**

GETTY IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK

Above: Guitarist Hubert Sumlin lights Howlin' Wolf's pipe as they pose for a portrait in a hotel room in San Francisco, 1968.

Below: Wolf with his band, 1971.

This page: **Holding an Epiphone hollowbody electric guitar behind the Fillmore in San Francisco, 1968.**

Opposite page: **recording, circa 1970.**

brooding, for much of his career he was a ferociously active performer. He gestured, shook, crawled across the stage, or even confronted his audience eyeball-to-eyeball. Acting out his songs, whether lascivious or threatening, or both, he thrived on reaction, transforming the introspective roots of the blues into a communal experience. This work rate was driven by the need to grab the attention of hard-to-impress Black audiences, but he was more than happy to entertain a white audience that had come to worship. "White people, they'll give you some reaction that makes you interested while doing it," he told a journalist in 1966. "Give a person a little shove-off, he gets his mind on what he wants to do and he'll do it well."

The intensity so evident in his music was real; it was the legacy of a hard beginning that never left him.

Offstage, the Wolf was a different beast. A devoted husband and father, he was quiet and serious, devoting his time to self-improvement to make up for his lack of education. Friends and even band members described him as gentle and scrupulously fair, and he paid his musicians well and stayed loyal to them. The intensity so evident in his music was real, however; it was the legacy of a hard beginning that never left him. His rivalry with Muddy Waters came close to viciousness, particularly when it touched on their shared songwriter Willie Dixon, but his anger came mostly in his dealings with the record industry. Particularly unfortunate were the Chess label's attempts, once the Doors and Led Zeppelin had begun to cover his songs, to update his sound by pushing him to remake his hits with a psychedelic band. Wolf dubbed the resulting record "the Dogshit Album", while even the cover of the record admitted that, "This is Howlin' Wolf's new album. He doesn't like it." A better result came with a 1971 teaming with Eric Clapton and members of the Rolling Stones, but by then the moment had passed and happily he chose to go his own way for his final recording, *The Back Door Wolf*, released in 1973, three years before his death.

By this time, he was a shadow of his former self, with both kidney and heart trouble. The blues boom had given way to rock, soul and funk, which, though they all had much to thank him for, were worlds that saw him as a relic. Time has proved them wrong. The cycles of fashion have thrown up new generations of acolytes — the White Stripes, the Black Keys, the Kings of Leon and more — and streaming has rewritten musical history. In the 21st century, his music takes its place beside anything from the previous 100 years, with no context or explanation needed, its power undiminished. The Wolf still bites.

GETTY IMAGES

MAGIC TOUCH

If Henrik Hjerl hasn't accomplished it, it's not worth accomplishing. The multi-talented and multi-hyphenate Dane opens his box of tricks for **THE RAKE**...

by ***joshua bozin*** *photography* ***brandon hinton***

1. An elegant outfit that highlights Savile Row tailoring. "The jacket and waistcoat were made by the master of pattern matching, Savile Row's Steven Hitchcock. The shirt is by Budd London and the tie was designed by my friend Fabio Attanasio."

2. Sunglasses by the Portuguese label FORA. "I like these sunglasses because the green Zeiss lenses are flat, not curved, as most glasses are today."

3. Dabbling in a career as a close-up magician, a deck of playing cards is always on Henrik's person for whenever a little fun is needed. "A lot of special pockets are needed for my props, such as these cards," Henrik says.

4. In keeping with the magic theme, this 'little hand' forms part of a trick that has delighted people for decades. "The hand is faster than the eye, but sometimes an extra little hand is needed," he says.

5. Henrik's love of magic is apparent. To the naked eye, this pocket-watch looks unfortunately broken. "But in a second," he says, "it can be magically restored into a working watch."

6. Want to see a magic trick? These silver and gold American dollars featuring Eisenhower "fly from one hand to the other... "

7. One of the most coveted Rolex watches on the market, the Submariner Hulk is seen here blending effortlessly with the wonderful green windowpane cloth from Fox Brothers 1772 and cufflinks from the Swedish brand Skultuna. "Your watch colour must match the colour of your coat!" Henrik says. This Rolex acts as a replacement for his original Black Submariner, which now lives 3,000 metres below the Hintertux glacier in Austria, as a result of a skiing accident.

8. An old ebony snuff box from Davidoff of London. "I have wonderful antique silver boxes only," he says. "The problem is that the tobacco dries out in those, as they are not airtight!"

From diplomat to butler to a stint in the circus, Henrik Hjerl has lived a life full of adventure and spontaneity. His travels have taken him to 194 countries, and he once spent 52 days on a deserted island.

Now, Hjerl spends his days teaching A-listers etiquette, form and style. One thing is certain: he has an innate eye for detail. He describes his sense of style as classical with a twist. "You are not overdressed — it's the rest of the world that is underdressed!" he says. "Tailoring was introduced to me by my father. Growing up on an estate, it was expected that one be dressed for dinner and wear a tie. My sartorial background goes back generations, which apparently makes my opinions and thus any advice more appreciated. The single most unflattering thing a man can do is to wear trousers too short."

Beyond his attention to the intricacies of menswear, it is how Hjerl comports himself that makes him an ideal subject for our Pocket Guide column.

This look is crafted by the master tailor Steven Hitchcock, and features Henrik's signature gauntlet cuff, patched breast pocket, and high waistcoat with the four pockets slanted at the same angle. "Hitchcock's perfect pattern matching is complemented by a pink shirt by Budd London and green suede loafers with brown tassels by Carmina of Mallorca," Henrik says. "I don't own an overcoat but instead wear this Spanish *capa* by Seseña of Madrid, transported over the shoulder with the green velvet lining showing... by complete coincidence."

MISSION ACCOMPLICE

Was it a coincidence that Led Zeppelin's creativity went into overdrive when Robert Plant and Jimmy Page retreated to rural Wales with Plant's merle Border Collie for company? We don't think so.

HOUND

by ***strider*** *as told to* ***scott harper***

The world of static art is packed with testimonies to the bond — which goes back at least 15,000 years — between humans and canines. One doesn't have to wait for the Italian Renaissance and oil-based paint first being applied to canvas to witness us, daubed in soot and red ochre on cave walls, acting as protectors, grazers, grafters, shepherds, hunters and companions to mankind.

The relationship between canines and the Homo sapiens who domesticated us is also celebrated prolifically in literature: from *Lassie Come Home* to Jack London's *White Fang* and *Call of the Wild* to *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, Garth Stein's 2008 novel about a racing driver but narrated by the reincarnation-obsessed pooch (named after Enzo Ferrari) who rides shotgun with him. (It's better than it sounds.)

But what of humans' relationship with their four-legged friends being celebrated via the harmony, melody and emotional expression of music? There's plenty out there. Frédéric Chopin's *Minute Waltz*, known in French as *Valse du Petit Chien*, was inspired by the Polish master having witnessed a dog chasing its tail; Paul McCartney's maligned but masterful jazz-dissonance-sprinkled *Martha My Dear* was a paean to his eponymous Old English Sheepdog; *Seamus*, the fifth track on Pink Floyd's 1971 album, *Meddle*, involved a Border Collie belonging to Humble Pie front man Steve Marriott wailing a melody over a country blues backing track.

The piece of artistic endeavour that has most poignantly recognised the attachment between man and dog, however, was written for yours truly, a humble merle Collie about whom Robert Plant co-wrote *Bron-Y-Aur Stomp*, along with guitar virtuoso Jimmy Page, while staying at the remote Welsh cottage whose name (misspelled on the Led Zep track listing) translates as 'breast of gold'. This was a period when Led Zeppelin veered away from their (Whole Lotta) love of power-chord blues-rock-slash-early metal towards mellow, bucolically endowed acoustic dream-folk. The track in question, indeed, is a hoedown inspired by the lazy rural saunters my master and I would take in the vicinity of a cottage formerly owned by his family.

Any reader who has seen the (mildly preposterous, to be honest) 1976 concert movie *The Song Remains the Same* will have seen me in the flesh in its early scenes; should they also be well versed in the intricacies of dog genetics — admittedly, it's a meagre intersection on the Venn diagram — they will have recognised and understood the dapple effect on my coat: the 'merle' variant of the breed has irregular patches, smudges and streaks resulting from an unusual interplay between dominant and recessive DNA.

The markings of our pelts might be scarce, but our temperaments and personalities are consistent with the Collie breed: intelligent, energetic, hard working and endlessly companionable. Little wonder that Robert, on a self-imposed exile

in search of musical inspiration, found as much of it in the flesh and blood of his canine companion as he did in the chlorophyllic contours found 90 miles west of his native West Bromwich.

The track in question contains lyrical nuggets of devotion such as, "There ain't no 'Old Shep' gonna happen again" — a reference to a song about a poisoned dog made famous by Elvis Presley's first ever public performance — and this is a sentiment neatly echoed by a quote from the character in *The Lord of the Rings* after whom I am named (Strider, aka Aragorn): "If by my life or death I can protect you, I will."

A closing thought: *Bron-Y-Aur Stomp* reached public ears around the time that American pastors, inexplicably playing Led Zeppelin records backwards, became convinced they could hear something more satanic than a mere bustle in the Brummie rockers' hedgerows. One can only assume these religious zealots hadn't got around to hearing a song that finds God's own divinity in western Wales, and hails the celestial joys of enjoying it with a quadruped companion.

GETTY IMAGES

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THE GOOD TIMES

She was a pioneer among supermodels and one half of an eighties It couple. But it took Yasmin Le Bon a while longer to find true fulfilment. 'I'm so glad I hung on for dear life in this profession,' she says.

by ***david smiedt***

Naomi aside, there's always been something rather approachable about your British supermodel. Blag yourself into a Glasto compound that your lack of notoriety doesn't deserve and you could find yourself occupying a similar slick of mud as Kate and Cara. But the woman who spearheaded the shift from aloof aristo to boho bonhomie was Yasmin Le Bon.

Le Bon was born Yasmin Parvaneh in 1964 to an Iranian father and English mother, and grew up in Oxford. She modelled for a local agency while she was still at the Cherwell School, but it was after she signed with Models 1 in London that her career took flight.

She emerged onto runways and production sets at a time when it seemed the never-ending garland of English roses was becoming interchangeable, their collective bouquet dimming. More Persia than Pimlico, there was a sense of defiance about Le Bon's mien — a notion that you needed her way more than she would ever need you. This manner never strayed into the arrogance that many other supers suppurated, but it was clear where you stood. Which could, conceivably, have been beside her at your local with a pint.

This blend of everywoman and the ethereal saw her approached for campaigns for everyone from Clairol (the brand that made your mum's hair rollers) to Christian Dior. That's some versatility.

Her profile skyrocketed when she dated, and quickly married, Simon Le Bon, the lead singer of the 1980s pop behemoths Duran Duran. The bride wore Benetton, as it was the only shop open on the morning they decided to get hitched. A snapper from the local paper took the pics, and the guests comprised those who happened to be around from the night before. The year was 1985, the bride was 21, and the ring cost £30. Who'd have thought that was the recipe for happily ever after? Asked recently whether they have considered renewing their vows, Yasmin said: "We thought about that years ago, but now I honestly don't think I could be bothered to organise a party. It would just be an ad hoc kind of thing, and we couldn't be arsed." Quite.

In an era before the contrived social media-fuelled narcissism of your Kimyes, the Le Bons were an effortless It couple. As if they'd somewhat ambivalently taken up the mantle of Birkin and Gainsbourg, added shoulders pads and hair gel, and decided to run with it as a lark. Or until something more fun came along.

Case in point: the 2013 edition of the Mille Miglia road race in Italy. Sharing the driving duties with the equally genetically favoured David Gandy, behind the wheel of a 1950 Jaguar XK120, Le Bon bounced back after being pushed off the road by a competitor to take out a respectable 158th place in a field of 415.

She is now — you may want to sit down for this — a grandmother, but clearly the one you'd want to have. As it were. Take, for example, the life-sized cardboard cutout of Simon's bandmate Nick Rhodes that Yasmin pops in the bay window of her London home to deter burglars. The home, just quietly, comprises 10 bedrooms, and she's just been given permission to extend the place, as her three adult daughters and their various partners/children refuse to move out. Which says something about a person's values, warmth and sense of family, as most of us couldn't wait to get the hell out of the old *casa*, right?

Although she still dabbles, most often for worthy causes, Le Bon eased back on modelling after getting married, but it's important to note that she was a pioneer in her field. Not only did she straddle the world of editorial and catwalk — a rarity at that juncture — but by the time Peter Lindbergh shot Linda, Christy, Naomi, Cindy and Tatjana Patitz for British *Vogue*'s January 1990 cover, Yasmin had been a fixture for seven years. The Ronaldo to their Mbappés.

She is also keen to puncture the gilded legend that has sprung up about the hard-partying ways of the original supers. "I was working hard and had the kids, so when I did go out I made sure I had a good time," she told the *Telegraph*. "I think [stories about] drugs in the modelling industry are exaggerated, though. We had to look good and get up early — there was hardly any retouching then, so we couldn't turn up looking terrible."

When Le Bon — known to her grandkids as Zsa Zsa — does the odd interview, there tends to be a charming frankness about her. She is a realist in an industry allergic to the concept. For one, she and her husband are not coasting by on the glory and royalties of days gone by. Yasmin is on record as saying that Duran Duran "signed two of the worst deals in recording history... We have a great life and we're comfortable, but we still have to work." One of her most recent appearances was modelling Winser London's spring 2022 range.

It's also telling that to this day, when the 57-year-old steps out at an event — such as the latest London exhibition by the celeb portraitist Dave Benett, in February — newspapers like the *Daily Mirror* leap on details of her outfits, as readers are clearly still interested in replicating them. Another sign of her and Simon's enduring cultural cachet is the prospect of a biopic about Duran Duran, with Yasmin tipping Ryan Reynolds to play her spouse.

But beyond that, her enduring media presence has taken on a significance she could never have foreseen. "I'm so glad I hung on for dear life in this profession," she says, "because everyone needs to be represented. It's ridiculous the amount of positive reaction I get from women my age who hardly ever get to see other fiftysomething grannies modelling."

GETTY IMAGES

KIM LANG

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Investments can be unpredictable, but not so with these two winners, which we have handpicked to provide you with sound and secure appreciation — aesthetically, spiritually and financially.

by ***justin hast***

Richard Lange Minute Repeater

The joy of A. Lange & Söhne is that production is so small (in the low thousands per year), they are still something of an insider's choice. The build quality in the hand is obvious, and the finishing is unparalleled. Looking for the definition of Lange wrapped up in a single watch? You may well have found it here. The all-new Richard Lange Minute Repeater is everything one would expect from Lange, including that most slippery of concepts that might be summed up in the phrase 'stealth wealth'.

On the dial side, it gives nothing away. Just the wildly elegant, restrained, elongated Roman numerals, three-part enamel finish, and running seconds at six o'clock. The giveaway? The minute repeater slide on the left flank of the 39mm platinum case. Let's not forget that A. Lange & Söhne has a tradition that dates to the era of pocket-watches in the late 19th century. In 2013, the grand complication ushered in an exciting comeback for the minute repeater in combination with a multitude of fascinating functions, such as the rattrapante chronograph and the perpetual calendar. Later we saw the Zeitwerk Minute Repeater and Richard Lange Minute Repeater, which squarely put the focus on the chiming mechanism as a singular complication.

So how does it all work? Well, it's quite simple (and hugely enjoyable): slide the action on the left-hand case, and the chiming mechanism will strike the hours, the quarter hours and the minutes. It follows a mechanical programme that with two differently tuned gongs can strike 720 different sequences — one for every minute in the 12-hour cycle. The hours sound at a lower pitch, the quarter hours with a double tone, and the minutes that have elapsed since the last quarter-hour with a higher-pitched tone.

Like all Lange watches, the real party starts only when you turn it over. In this case, the manually wound movement, L122.1, is visible through a sapphire-crystal caseback that reveals the entire scope of artisanal finissage, polished gold chatons, three-quarter plate made of untreated German silver, Glashütte ribbing, and thermally blued screws — the full monty. It is obsessive, but that's what you get at Lange.

This watch is for somebody who prefers to whisper, not shout. In a limited edition of 50 pieces, you have more chance of hearing one of these than ever seeing one in the wild.

www.alange-soehne.com

Longines Spirit Zulu Time

Now, 2021 was the year of green dials. If this Longines Spirit Zulu Time is anything to go by, 2022 might be the year of the green bezel. It is fair to say nobody in the business does vintage-inspired like Longines. They really have nailed it. And this new submission is no different.

Historically speaking, Longines have made some incredibly important pocket-watches and wrist watches that have been used in the skies. This Spirit Zulu Time is a perfect balance of function and rugged charm. With a GMT function, it takes its design cues from the first Longines wristwatch to indicate a second time zone, the model Zulu Time of 1925, with its Z flag on the dial (Z stands for Zulu Time, the universal time format used in aviation). It is fitted with a new calibre that powers a triple timezone display, a date indication at six o'clock, and a bidirectional rotating bezel made of a ceramic insert bearing a 24-hour scale. The dial is black, with a matt finish. On closer inspection you will see the Arabic numerals are applied and the Super-LumiNova generously applied (you won't have to worry about telling the time on your walk home after dinner — that is, as long as you can still walk). The hands are silver polished with more Super-LumiNova and the GMT hand is black and blue, with a touch of gilt polishing.

This new calibre is also COSC certified. Getting into the geeky stuff here, the Contrôle Officiel Suisse des Chronomètres (or the official Swiss chronometer testing institute) is an independent organisation that tests Swiss-made watches. The organisation is very specific about the standard it will accept for testing, and even more particular about what it certifies. To meet the COSC standard, a watch needs to be accurate to -4 to +6 seconds a day. It also needs to be Swiss-made and built from the highest quality materials with the greatest levels of care.

The case is 42mm and 13.90mm thick (a sweet spot for a tool watch for most wrist sizes). The sapphire crystal is domed, with multilayered anti-reflective coating on both sides. It is also water resistant to 100 meters with the help of its screw-down crown. It really does cover all bases. The Longines Spirit Zulu Time is as reliable as it is good looking.

www.longines.com

CUSTOM

SHACKLES OFF

THE RAKE's *Editor-in-Chief, Tom Chamberlin, joined forces with Vitale Barberis Canonico and Lorenzo Cifonelli to conjure an adventurous jacket that symbolises bespoke menswear in 2022.*

by ***tom chamberlin*** *photography* ***kim lang***

Bespoke should be fun. If it's not an enjoyable experience, you should ask for your money back. The tailor's role here is vital — he or she should make you feel comfortable and engage with you as a partner in a project rather than a customer. Instilling trust and bringing a degree of showmanship to the process goes a long way.

It is also incumbent on the client to be as helpful as possible in conveying thoughts, feelings and desires, so that what is required of the garment can be made manifest. "I don't really know what I want" isn't a particularly helpful approach when every tailor has tens of thousands of fabric choices. You shouldn't be afraid to ask for what you want, or you might end up like I did at a spa in Los Angeles. I was asked whether I preferred a male or female therapist for a massage, and worried I might sound like a creep if I said I had no preference. So, of course, I turned up and this surfer with bear mitts that had been hardened presumably by saltwater and hours of board waxing ushered me into a room and I endured what felt like a punishment dished out by someone having a bad day. I deserved it as much as I detested it. Never again.

You shouldn't be afraid to ask for what you want, or you might end up like I did at a spa in Los Angeles.

In my latest bespoke adventure, there were no such teething problems, as I had in mind the fabric I wanted to use as well as the tailor, who is both familiar with me and a design genius (which I felt this fabric required).

The fabric was the new Pantone from Vitale Barberis Canonico, a teal blue flannel called Moroccan Blue. While it is a bold and exotic choice, it is nevertheless breathtaking. The handle is very smooth — some flannels can feel like a lovely item of knitwear, soft but hairy and unstructured. In natural light it tones down, and indoors it draws the eye with great impact.

With that in mind, I sought the unrivalled creative guidance of Lorenzo Cifonelli. What his eponymous brand has been focusing on recently is the way our tailoring needs outside of business broaden the playing field. He and his cousin Massimo have been experimenting with silhouettes, button stances, pocket designs, fabrics and embellishments that in some cases seem avant-garde. So there was no one better to take such a frisky colour and put it to good use.

Alas, I needed to be re-measured, since my last suit with Lorenzo was for my wedding, in 2016 — two children ago. I wore it in front of him at an event recently and he gave a small gesture of encouragement, but nevertheless, the old paper pattern needed amending.

The design blends utilitarian and sharp, traditional tailoring techniques and silhouettes. I am fortunate in that being tall and forced into rowing from a young age, I have broad shoulders, and that works well with Lorenzo's sculpturing. So we went with his signature 6x1 double-breasted buttoning, which uses beautiful, subtle, dark-blue mother-of-pearl buttons. His lapels are like scimitars or cutlasses, swooping and bold. We added a half belt, which gave a more casual but sporty look, as well as pinch pleats. These pinch pleats are important for two reasons. Firstly, they enhance the silhouette around the waist, holding the shape of the jacket, and from behind they provide a military rigidity. Secondly, they offset the pockets we added.

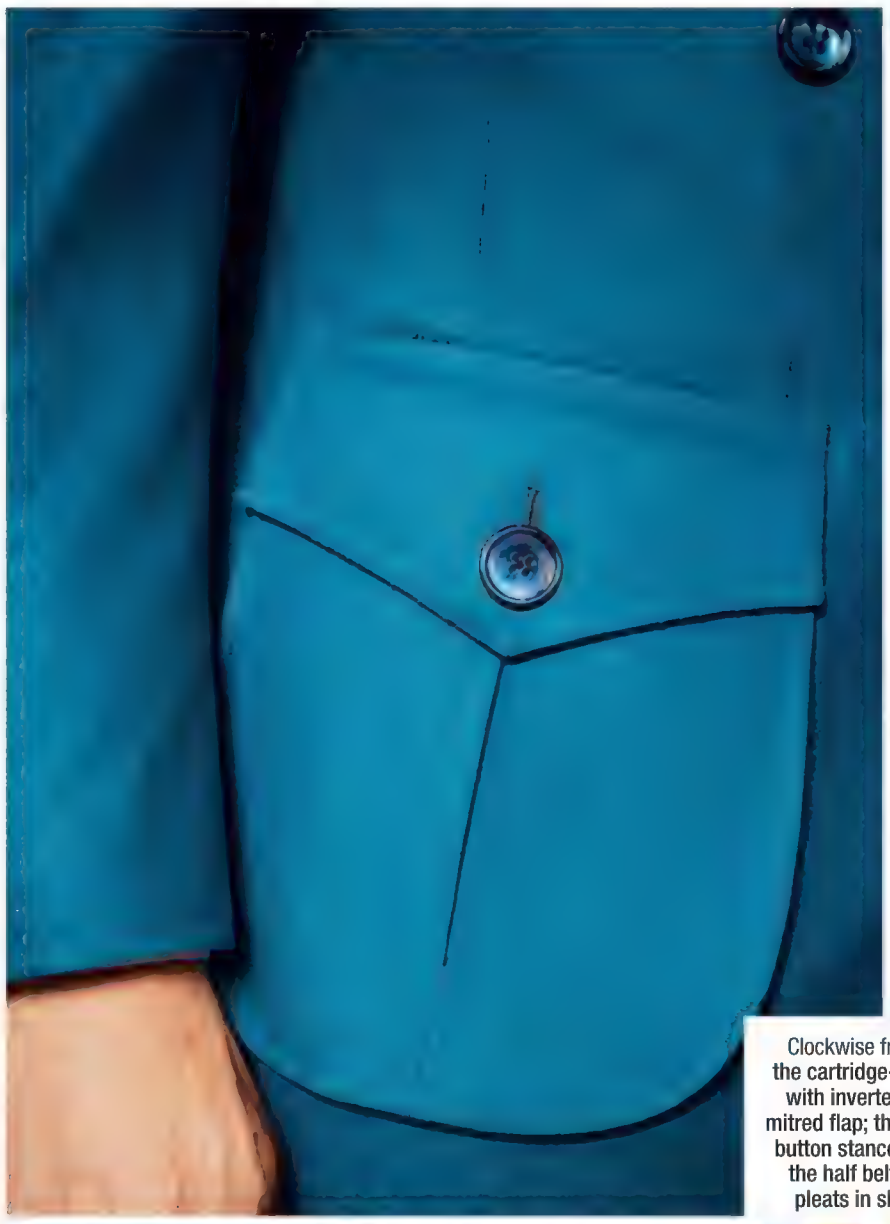
The pockets are recognisable from some of the more experimental bespoke work Lorenzo has been doing of late. They are the ultimate utility pockets, with a broadened bell shape for extra capacity, subtle bellows, and inverted pleats that allow for a bit more stretch without having to make the pockets broader or deeper. A mitred flap and button mean they can be secured to the jacket and not hang open. The size was determined by a leather cigar case that I commissioned in the same colour as the flannel.

The first fitting was as pared back as you might imagine. The pockets were not in, but the shape across the body was everything (perhaps because of my adjusted dimensions). Cifonelli's shoulder is legendary, and the armhole placement is crucial in creating the shape. There is also a comfort element Lorenzo looks for — wanting comfort to not be entirely compromised by couture.

At the second fitting the jacket was armless (for armhole quality control purposes), but the main body of the jacket was

First fitting, clockwise from top left: **marking where the arm sits, to help with the sleeve pitch; marking the button placement; showing the inner workings; and (alas) checking the waist measurements.**

Second fitting, clockwise from top: checking the balance of the back panel; the pocket and buttons; and Lorenzo scans the jacket to check for irregularities and imperfections.



Clockwise from top left: the cartridge-bag pockets with inverted pleat and mitred flap; the famous 6x1 button stance of Cifonelli; the half belt and pinch pleats in sharp relief.

almost there. This was a particularly good fitting, largely because Lorenzo and I could see how brilliantly the fabric was working: it was so vibrant, soft, slick and exciting. It was also very nice to have Lorenzo visiting in a kind of post-Covid ceremony, of the sort that re-connects us with the people we have formed close relationships with over the years. At my age I feel like I have figured out who I want to spend my time with and I am grateful to them for putting up with my company.

Getting a fitting from Lorenzo is a great spectator sport. He races around you, imagining, his eyes scanning with a piercing squint. He obsesses, it seems, over two areas: the waist, as he returns to check again and again how the shape sits along the side of the jacket; and the yolk. In a purely platonic manner, he rolls his hands over the trapeziums to make sure the jacket sits flush. I have an enhanced nape, owing to my height, a subconscious need to fit in (all tall people have this), and broad but sloped shoulders, so there is plenty of technical wizardry required to get this balance right. It is worth noting that the fabric did its share of the heavy lifting, not only by bringing personality but with its capacity to embrace and flatter my cumbersomeness.

In the end, the colour was perhaps a subconscious nod to the playfulness of the project. Lorenzo and I were just two parts of a tailoring threesome that sparked joy in all of us. The fabric from Vitale Barberis Canonico set the tone, and it inspired one of the world's most innovative tailors into action. My new jacket is perhaps a statement of 2022 bespoke: unshackled, adventurous, uninhibited, creative and, most importantly, fun.

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

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articles

ENCHANTING; STILL TICKING ALONG; **GUITAR HEROES;** CREATED IN HIS OWN IMAGINARIUM; **AND THERE WAS LIGHT;** IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE, ROCK ON.

GETTY IMAGES

LIFE WITH MARS

From superhero blockbusters, critically acclaimed satire and Disney features to action-adventure, dystopian sci-fi and musical rom-coms, James Marsden has colonised our screens. **TOM CHAMBERLIN** *gives thanks.*

photography **kurt iswarienko** *stylist* **ilaria urbinati**

I have an unprofessional bias towards James Marsden. For starters, the man's tip-top reputation in Tinseltown is enough for anyone to think highly of him. "He's literally the nicest guy in showbusiness," says one of Hollywood's major publicists. "I would love him as a client simply to be around his good energy." My personal affection for him stems from an issue many mothers and fathers will relate to. For years we parents toil to hold our children's attention for more than 10 minutes; it's knackering. The prospect of a child sitting through a film (yes, screens, but I mix it with Joyce and Dostoevsky, so don't judge) seems unattainable. At least, I thought it was until early in lockdown, when things seemed bleak, queues massed outside supermarkets, and our own prime minister was attached to a ventilator with a touch-and-go prognosis. It was then my family decided to watch *Sonic the Hedgehog*. An hour and a half later, our boys rapt, my wife and I looked at each other in disbelief.

Marsden is the film's lead (alongside Ben Schwartz, as the voice of Sonic), and we have subsequently watched it a hundred times. I am not resentful about having been made to watch it over and over: it's an entertaining movie, with solid set pieces, an excellent soundtrack (with the genius inclusion of the Poppy Family's 1971 song *Where Evil Grows*), and moustachioed villainy from Jim Carrey, so what's not to love? I certainly didn't think I would enjoy it as much as I did. Turns out neither did Marsden. "I am right there with you, in that it surprised the hell out of me as well," he says. "Not that I ever thought it was going to be a bad movie, I always knew it was going to be a great, fun movie, but still. There was a moment at the premiere in Los Angeles — it was me, Tika [Sumpter, who plays his wife, Maddie] sitting on my left, Ben on my right, and Jim Carrey right behind me, and there was a collective moment where all four of us looked at each other and said, 'This is pretty damn good'. I hate to be all 'industry' but we wanted it to be a 'four-quadrant' movie, where you hit all demographics, but it's a live-action mixed with animation where the lead is talking to an animated blue alien hedgehog, so it could easily be seen as geared towards kids."

As much as it is pertinent to be talking to James in light of the Chamberlin family's sentimentality, there is no time-sensitive reason for it. Instead, that rationale comes from the imminent release of the Sonic sequel — only the second sequel Marsden has been a part of in almost 30 years. For this, the producers have kept the old cast and drafted in Idris Elba to play Knuckles. "The formula is, if you do your first film and it goes gangbusters and everyone loves it, the leash gets taken off," James says. "The floodgates are opened, and you can do everything you wanted to do on the first film that maybe they weren't ready to give you the money for because it hasn't been proven yet." Discussing James's latest projects is a bit like watching a sequel first, however, for it misses out the exciting journey in which he has tackled multiple genres and brought heads, hearts and hedgehogs under the spell of his matinee-idol looks and multifarious talent.

"It was like an assembly line ... but I grew up surrounded by great people who saw that I didn't fit the mould."

The journey began when Sonic was first released — as a computer game, in the early nineties. James, who lived in Oklahoma as a young man, says: "I grew up in a modest household. I took the bus to school, I had friends, no one was famous, no one was wealthy. In many cases it was like an assembly line: you get married at 21, you get married to your high school sweetheart, you go to church, you get an honest job. I grew up surrounded by great people who believed in me and saw that I didn't fit this mould."

Entering option:
Suede bomber jacket,
cashmere turtle-neck
sweater, white cotton T-shirt,
all **Brunello Cucinelli**.

This page:
Knitted T-shirt and
tailored trousers, **Brioni**,
patent-leather dress shoes
Christian Louboutin, **IWC**
Portofino Chronograph,
James Marsden's own.

Cashmere overcoat, Prince of Wales check double-breasted blazer, roll-neck sweater, all **Brioni**.

Roll-neck sweater and trousers, **Brioni**; IWC gold Portuguese Perpetual Calendar, *James Marsden's own.*

He was not exactly a pariah at school for the fact he didn't fit the mould. He just wasn't going to be the standard-issue Midwest child. He made his home in theatre and performance: "I was the sketch-guy in high school. I would come into class and do impressions or knock off Dana Carvey and Mike Myers. I wondered, How do I make something out of this? I was young, confident and ballsy enough to pack my shit and move to Los Angeles and give it a try. If I'd known then what I know now, I probably would have been too scared to take that leap."

Interestingly, his high school shtick might have worked better on the other coast. "The dream job would be a regular on *Saturday Night Live*," he says. "I never saw myself as the leading man, I was a small, goofy kid growing up in Oklahoma around these corn-fed football players." His mother and father were very supportive of him. They gave him a year's worth of backing, financially and spiritually, after which it was understood he would need to return to college (where he had completed only three semesters). There was one crunch moment, when his father flew in after hearing that James had been offered a role on *Days of Our Lives*, which might have provided a three-year income. His manager advised him to turn down the role, much to his and his father's confusion, but his agent insisted that the feedback for other projects had been so good that it was better to pursue that avenue for a longer career. Not listening to his father involved a leap of faith for Marsden. It paid dividends, and 28 years later he still refuses to pigeonhole himself in a specific genre; he is "the reliable workhorse, and I am really proud of that. I am not great at anything but I am good at a lot of things."

With a few credits under his belt around the turn of the millennium, such as the brooding teen melodrama *Gossip*, he found himself in the earliest iteration of the new generation of superhero movies when he was cast in *X-Men*. The difference between being cast in a superhero film back then and, say, a Marvel or DC project today is gargantuan. Twenty years ago it was a toe-dipping exercise; the attempts at superhero films before that had not been particularly successful. Marsden was cast as Cyclops, next to Hugh Jackman's Wolverine (another newcomer, if you can believe it), Halle Berry (yet to win her Oscar for *Monster's Ball*), and former *Star Trek* leading man Sir Patrick Stewart. None of them knew how the cinematic landscape would shift in their direction; they were the vanguard of a multibillion-dollar format from which, if you are cast in it today, "you can ride that horse into the sunset", as James puts it.

"I was ballsy enough to try it in L.A. If I'd known then what I know now, I probably would have been too scared."

Preparation for *X-Men* had its positives and negatives, he says: "I had been in L.A. for five years when I auditioned for it. It was the first potential blockbuster, and I remember going to the audition and wearing the biggest boots I could find to make myself as tall as possible. I remember going into the bathroom before it and doing 50 push-ups and curling my arms because I wanted to walk in looking like a superhero. I ended up getting the role and I had no idea how huge the fanbase was.

"I was not particularly clear on who the X-Men were, frankly. I knew Batman and Superman, but the X-Men were these darker, more interesting superheroes. So here I was thrust into this world that felt big and felt expensive and felt like the world was watching. But this was because in my mind I knew that the superhero movies that had been tried before hadn't really been pulled off. They were wearing spandex and there was a goofy element to it. The whole point [to *X-Men*] was to really ground it, really make it have meaning and really

Sweater, pinstripe shirt and trousers, **Ralph Lauren Purple Label**.

“The greatest career you can have is one of choices. You have the choice of people you want to work with, directors you want to work with, and scripts that only a few people get their hands on. X-Men opened those doors on me.”

have it be about tolerance and embracing people for their individuality. There were themes that were given importance, and I think that is why it resonated. It wasn't comic-booky. Privately, however, I am thinking, This did so much for my career, but I didn't do much in those movies. I just put the glasses on and had a little banter with Wolverine and fired a laser beam out of my eye.

"The greatest career you can have is one of choices. You have the choice of the people you want to work with, the directors you want to work with, the scripts that only a few people could get their hands on. *X-Men* started opening those doors on me. So I am very grateful to have been in that family."

"I went into the bathroom before the audition and did 50 push-ups — I wanted to walk in looking like a superhero."

His *X-Men* journey lasted three films, and in between he had roles in films such as *Zoolander*, *Superman Returns* and *The Notebook* (more on this later). Once the run concluded, in 2006, with *X-Men: The Last Stand* (save for a cameo on *X-Men: Days of Future Past* in 2014), he used his newfound choice to conduct something of a volte-face, as he mustered his Prince Charming métier for Disney's *Enchanted*. The film, in which he starred alongside Amy Adams, revealed James's very serious singing talent and returned him to his comic roots. The sequel, *Disenchanted*, comes out later this year.

Sticking to musicals, he played Corny Collins in the 2007 film *Hairspray*, for which he could thank Julia Roberts, at least in part. He says: "It was a meeting-audition, at an off-Broadway bar somewhere, and we were just talking about the role and I was trying to convince [the producers and director] I could do the role. Just then I felt a tap on my shoulder, and it was Julia Roberts, who had been sitting two booths behind us. She said, 'I am so sorry to interrupt, but you are in my favourite movie of all time, *The Notebook*. I stood up and I probably inappropriately embraced her and said, 'I love everything you're in'. Then Adam [Shankman], the director, said, 'I think the role may have been yours anyway, but Julia Roberts has certainly sealed it for you'."

This would not have been the only potential faux pas he has had with superstars. He was also the third wheel on Calista Flockhart (his co-star on *Ally McBeal*) and Harrison Ford's first date. He even joined them back at Ford's place for cocktails.

His television appearances have trended along the sitcom trail, with guest spots on *Modern Family* and *30 Rock*. And if at one stage you weren't convinced that he was among the more multifaceted actors of his generation, James reconfigured himself again, quite literally, in the HBO mega-series *Westworld*, as the robot 'host' Teddy Flood. This brought out the RRL model in Marsden, who looked every bit as comfortable dusting off his cowboy hat as he did dressed like Lord Farquhar.

Westworld felt like an important landmark, as the show is not escapism in the way a lot of his previous projects have been. The *Westworld* audience tune in because they are obsessed with its intellectual heft and the thought-provoking meandering the show indulges in. "When they called me, they said this was a prestigious project with really great writers and showrunners, and it was Jonah [Jonathan] Nolan, the brother of Chris and the writer of the *The Dark Knight* and *Memento*. It was something that was shot in Los Angeles, and I was very keen to be in town for my kids. The conceit of the show was taking the concept of the original film — Jonah was saying he wanted to take it to a whole other level, dealing with really complex themes like the future of A.I., what it means to be human and have consciousness. The cast was pretty much already set except for me and Dolores, so there was Thandie Newton, Jeffrey Wright, Anthony Hopkins,

Knit cardigan, knit polo shirt and white tapered trousers, all **Brunello Cucinelli**; IWC Big Pilot, *James Marsden's own.*

"In my first big scene with Anthony Hopkins, I was fully naked on a stool opposite him, and I was like, How many people can claim to have had this experience... zero! My mind was also saying, You look like you lost a bet."

Suede bomber jacket, white cotton T-shirt, cashmere turtle-neck sweater, cotton chinos, all **Brunello Cucinelli**, MC Big Pilot, *James Marsden's own.*

Pinstripe shirt and trousers, **Ralph Lauren Purple Label**; IWC Portuguese Annual Calendar, *James Marsden's own.*

GROOMING: DAN STANWELL AT THE WALL GROUP
PRODUCTION: GARETT QUIGLEY

Ed Harris ... It was very much a case of, Where do I sign?" Part of the appeal of the show is the inversion of the typical power dynamic between men and women. While, yes, Marsden's character is a brooding and rugged fellow, in the face of the show's antagonist, Dolores Abernathy (played by Evan Rachel Wood), he takes the beta place on screen. He says: "With my role as Teddy and Evan's role as Dolores, there was a reversal of these classic Hollywood tropes — you know, the Gary Cooper-*High Noon*, comes into town and takes care of the little lassie. We just take that and turn it completely on its head — I was the one who needed saving. It was exciting to be a part of something that was going to be groundbreaking, that was going to do something different. It was really taking a leap to do something challenging and different and therefore more rewarding."

"We turned it on its head — I was the one who needed saving. It was exciting to be part of something different."

This was also smack-bang in the middle of the new golden age of television. Hit shows like *Game of Thrones*, *The Crown* and *Westworld* have had fandoms and budgets that equal their Hollywood counterparts. The difference, of course, is that through television the story can roll on for several years. Presumably, for someone used to the big screen, the approach was different? "You don't get the full script, do you?" James says. "On a movie you get the beginning, the middle and the end. For *Westworld* you get a little bit of the beginning, and then as you get into it you get a little more information, and so on, you have no idea what the trajectory is going to be or the path your character is going to go down. You just place a lot of trust on the showrunners who are going to take you on a special journey and you're going to play an integral part in that. Also, longer days, films shoot less per day, it is two pages per day — with [*Westworld*] it would be an hour's show in two and a half weeks, you're flying, there is a lot of stuff to get through."

It was also another chance to work with genuine legends of the profession, such as Sir Anthony Hopkins, whom Marsden calls "the gentlest, kindest, most loving human being. My first big scene with him was just he and I, and I was fully naked sitting opposite him on a stool, and I was like, How many people can claim to have had this experience... zero! My mind was also saying, You look like you lost a bet."

The effect Covid has had on the film industry is profound. The rubric that had determined how films were released — cinema then DVD then home viewing — has been chucked on the scrapheap to be replaced by a multi-medium approach. Marsden says: "I feel like it is not a zero-sum game. I think there is a world where everything can co-exist. You're going to have the cinema release, the chance to buy at home, and the people who still want something tactile, the Blu-ray. We are here to entertain the audience, to give them what they want, so if they want flexibility, then I see that happening."

This may or may not have an impact on how the second iteration of *Sonic* is received. It was a remedy for families cooped up together; perhaps dialling the story up to 11 is necessary to draw new attention and ensure its popularity matches the original. Whatever happens, we know James Marsden has done more than most to entertain audiences, tell stories, and make a mark on the cultural landscape. Interestingly, I note that in all of our discussions about choice and power dynamics, I didn't point out that, in truth, the people with the most choice are the audience. We spend our time running our fingers over cinema timetables, scrolling through Netflix recommendations, endlessly discriminating. If we have come back to James Marsden time and again, it says everything about the power of his appeal.

THE GREAT OAK

It is extraordinary to think that one of the most irresistible watches of the modern era can trace its origins to an antiquated diving helmet. But Audemars Piguet's Royal Oak has always possessed a special kind of alchemy. **ROSS POVEY** *celebrates five decades of a horological legend and previews AP's anniversary models.*

photography **charlie gray**

I remember reading a letter from the sheriff of these parts, Editor-in-Chief Tom Chamberlin, in which he argued that the labelling of an object or person as 'iconic' was overused and therefore grated on him. Ever since, I have used the word sparingly. However, I feel that in writing this story, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Audemars Piguet Royal Oak, the shackles have been removed and I can liberally throw around the term. For if any watch deserves to be held up as an icon, it is surely this rock star of the watch world.

An overnight sensation

Five decades is a long time, especially in this high-turnover, fast-moving, bored-quickly world in which we live. The genesis of the Royal Oak has been told many times, but it is arguably one of the most incredible stories in the history of watchmaking and perhaps in the history of design. The hand that penned the Royal Oak belonged to the legendary watch designer Gérald Genta, whose creativity was responsible for some of the most well-known timepieces of the 20th century. I have always thought of Genta as akin to one of the master session guitarists of the 1970s, a player such as Big Jim Sullivan. Sullivan was one of the most prolific and in-demand guitarists of his era, with dozens of credits to his name for artists such as the Rolling Stones, Tom Jones and Shirley Bassey. What Sullivan did was weave his unique touch into the star's 'house' style; all told, he played on an incredible 49 No.1 singles.

The history of the Royal Oak starts in 1970, on the eve of the Baselworld show. That one of the most enduring horological creations was designed in a single evening is astonishing, and shows that the story of the watch's origin goes beyond Genta to include Audemars Piguet's craftspeople and the best artisans in the industry. That's not all. It needed the courage of AP's then General Manager, Georges Golay, and Jacques-Louis Audemars, then the Chairman of the board and the man in charge of production, to bring the radical design alive, as well as the manufacturing team's ability to make both a prototype and the first series within a year. They were incredible feats.

Italy has always been a significant market for wristwatches, and in fact the country is credited with inventing the art of watch collecting. It was an Italian client of Audemars Piguet to whom Golay wanted to pitch a new sports watch. Since the 1920s, watch design had been relatively stagnant, but glamorous Europeans wanted something beyond the classical wristwatch. Tastes were changing, and there was an emerging luxury-hungry demographic that was congregating in Euro-hotspots on the Riviera. Wei Koh, the founder of *The Rake* and *Revolution*, says: "Many of these families came from Italy, such as the mythical Agnellis. These individuals would spend part of their lives at play on the water, on their boats and on the ski slopes, then attend the most formal business meetings and the most glamorous dinners and black-tie balls. But no one had created a watch that would be equally at home in all these situations. Looking back now, there was clearly a powerful zeitgeist, and AP were among the first to recognise and respond to it."

My creative licence allows me to imagine Genta, on the eve of Baselworld 1970, working through the night, cigarette in hand and chugging espressos as he tweaked the design that would afford Golay the opportunity to unveil the watch on the opening morning of the show. Golay's brief to Genta had been clear: he wanted a revolutionary design of a steel watch that would be finished to the same high standards of a precious metal watch. From dive to dinner and slopes to suppers, this would be the ultimate sports and dress crossover timepiece. And Genta's inspiration led him to ensure that the watch was also waterproof. In his memoir, Genta confirmed the story, writing: "I designed it overnight, and my idea was to replicate the system of the scaphander's helmet on the watch case ... "

Glamorous Europeans congregating on the Riviera wanted something beyond the classical wristwatch.

What makes the Royal Oak king

A scaphander is the traditional diving suit worn by deep-sea explorers. Think of a mid-20th century pre-scuba diver and you'll imagine the big, round, brass helmet, thick suit with air pipe, and the weighted shoes. Genta was inspired by memories of his youth, when he would watch divers being prepared for dives while on the Pont de la Machine in Geneva. In particular, the recollection of the eight screws that secured the visor on the front of the helmet gave him the concept for making the watch waterproof, and he even included the visible seal from the helmet's construction as a key component of the Royal Oak's water-resisting architecture.

The watch that debuted in 1972 was the reference 5402ST, the ST referencing the fact that it was a steel watch. The prototyping of this watch was done in white-gold, which is much quicker and easier to work with than steel, as it is much softer. Genta's design required a level of finishing that was equally novel and complex, and trying to achieve this at the test stage in steel would have taken a lot longer. Working with gold, however, was very costly. In a magnificent strategic feat, the watch was ready two years after the design was drawn, and yet the question remained: how would the public react to such a disruptive newcomer?

In the modern era, it's hard to understand how shocking this watch was in 1972. The design was in tune with the popular

Opening page:
Leeny wears cashmere cable-knit sweater, wool pleated trousers with belt, **Polo Ralph Lauren**.

Royal Oak Selfwinding 34mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

Robertas wears a cashmere and silk Ravello jacket, cotton shirt and silk pocket-square, **Brioni**.

Royal Oak Selfwinding Chronograph, 41mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

This page:
Leeny wears cotton ribbed roll-neck and checked wool flares, **Sportmax at Fenwick**; platform boots, **Roker**; earrings, **Roxanne First**.

Royal Oak "Jumbo" Extra-Thin, 39mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

Robertas wears light brown silk and wool cocktail suit, beige twill hidden button-down shirt, **Edward Sexton**; print silk tie, **Cifonelli for The Rake**; silk pocket-square, **New & Lingwood**; socks, **The London Sock Company**; Luca brown penny loafers, **Malone Souliers**.

Royal Oak "Jumbo" Extra-Thin, 39mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

It's hard to understand how shocking this watch was in 1972. It was a strong statement within the conservative Swiss watchmaking industry.

Leeny wears cream cashmere cable-knit sweater and jeans, **Polo Ralph Lauren**.

Royal Oak Selfwinding, 37mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

Robertas wears cream cashmere roll-neck sweater, **John Smedley**; flannel Aleksandar trousers, **Kit Blake**.

Royal Oak "Jumbo" Extra-Thin, 39mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

culture of the time and was a great fit with the zeitgeist of the European elite's lifestyle habits, but it was a strong statement within the conservative Swiss watchmaking industry. There was also the issue of price. The watch retailed for the same amount as a Jaguar XJ6 car at the time. Again, in the current watch market, this isn't as eyebrow raising as one might imagine, but in 1972 it was a move that verged on the outrageous when competitors' steel sports watches, such as the Rolex Submariner, cost one tenth of the CHF3,300 Royal Oak. This was also against the backdrop of a developing Quartz crisis and a global recession brought about by the soaring price of oil.

The most striking element of the Royal Oak is its octagonal bezel. It was a signature of Genta's, and was never bolder than when executed on the Royal Oak. The bezel is secured by eight screws that, to the casual observer, look like they could be untightened and tightened as and when the watch needs to be dismantled. A closer look, however, reveals that the screws have hexagonal heads that sit within hexagonal-form recesses in the bezel. These screws are tightened from the caseback thanks to eight insert nuts. This clever design pulls the entire watch together. The bezel has a visible gasket that sits between it and the case to ensure the entire unit is hermetically sealed. This was further assisted by the fact that the watch was of a two-piece monocoque design where the case and caseback were one single piece.

The most striking element of the Royal Oak is the octagonal bezel — a signature of designer Gérald Genta.

The case finishing was and still is a marvel of artisan craftsmanship. The contrasting brushed and polished surfaces worked beautifully to add a sparkle of pure quality. Combined with the strong eight-sided bezel, the watch was immediately recognisable and unmistakably a Royal Oak from 20 metres away. Today, with the advancements in technology, the only way to truly refinish a Royal Oak case is to engage the manufacturer as part of a full service. For this reason, collectors of Audemars Piguet watches always insist on a manufacturer service when buying vintage pieces.

Going back to the collaborative element of the Royal Oak, Audemars Piguet needed the very best manufacturers on board to help realise the perfect watch. In the early 1970s, watch production tended to have a horizontal structure rather than the now more common vertical structure. This meant that different companies would provide a watch's various components (horizontal model) as opposed to the parts being made in-house (vertical). The dial in the Royal Oak is known as the Petite Tapisserie, and it was originally manufactured by Stern. The dials were made one at a time by hand, using traditional guilloché copying machines — essentially a geometric lathe that can cut complex symmetrical patterns known as guilloché. It is something very different and more complex than simple engine turning. AP have now developed an in-house solution using purpose-built automated rose engine lathes that cut each dial based on a master pattern, not unlike the way key-cutting machines work. However, the initial development that went into creating the Tapisserie included the investment in antique guilloché copying machines, repairing them and adjusting them by hand and then learning how to use them. Stern were regarded as the masters of dial making, and so it made sense for them to be part of Team Royal Oak.

Another of the key elements of the Royal Oak is the integrated bracelet. Sure, there were other integrated bracelet steel sports watches before 1972, but none has gone on to have the impact of the Royal Oak. Like every element of this high-end watch, so complex was the original bracelet construction that only one company was up to the challenge of bringing Genta and Golay's dream to life. Gay Frères were the industry leaders in bracelet design and produced some of the world's most instantly recognisable bracelets. From the 1950s onwards, they were the only manufacturers to have invested in the machinery to be able to produce the volume of steel bracelets that brands such as Audemars Piguet needed. Working in gold was fairly straightforward, as it was easy to shape, but steel was a different animal entirely, and the complicated construction of the Royal Oak bracelet needed the Gay Frères touch. They worked diligently through 1971 and early '72 to have the bracelet perfected and delivered in time for the April launch.

In 2002, Genta said: "You, my Royal Oak, the masterpiece of my career, produced by Le Brassus artisans, you're the magical achievement of a dream from my childhood!" This quote perfectly summarises the concerted effort that went into the watch and the power of a combined effort from Genta and the talented team at Audemars Piguet in Le Brassus as well as partners further afield.

An enduring legend

The Royal Oak has never gone out of fashion and is currently one of the most sought-after watches on the market. So popular has it been that there were once rumours that Audemars Piguet were considering creating a standalone brand called Royal Oak. Did the watch save AP from financial ruin? Let's be clear, that story is more urban myth than matter of record. The early 1970s were still early days, in terms of the Quartz crisis, and in fact by the time that battery-driven tickers had become mainstream, the Royal Oak was already hot property. Couple this with the fact that their ultra-slim and ultra-successful perpetual calendar arrived in the later years of the same decade, and it's safe to say that AP were never really on the ropes. Yes, the number of Swiss watch

Lucky wears cream cashmere cable-knit sweater and jeans, **Polo Ralph Lauren**.

Royal Oak Softwinding, 37mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

Robertas wears cream cashmere rib-neck sweater, **John Smedley**, [illegible] Aleksandar [illegible], **Kit Blake**.

Royal Oak "Jumbo" Extra-Thin, [illegible], **Audemars Piguet**.

Leeny wears silk single-cuff loose blouse, **Connolly**; cream pleated wool trousers, **Polo Ralph Lauren**, black suede court shoes, **Jimmy Choo**.

Royal Oak Selfwinding, 37mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

Robertas wears cream knit long sleeve polo and light brown silk trousers, **Ralph Lauren Purple Label**.

Royal Oak Selfwinding, 37mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

manufacturers fell from 1,600 to 600 between the early seventies and the early eighties, but Audemars Piguet arguably thrived in this era, as they created an opportunity out of a crisis.

Why is the watch so coveted? According to Eric Ku, one of the world's leading dealers and the owner of the Loupe This auction platform: "The Royal Oak really is many firsts. First of the rich man's sports watches and the first of the iconic Genta designs." Ku has been collecting and selling Royal Oak models for as long as he has been interested in watches, and has handled all the important iterations of the recent years. If he had to choose, what are his top three references? "Well, certainly the reference 5402, as it was the very first watch that started them all," he says. "Then I'd have to include the reference 25554, which was the first Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar and also one of the first perpetual calendars produced in a series made of steel. Finally, I'd say the 16202, the new time-only Classic Royal Oak. It's the first 'Jumbo' to have a new movement, the 7121. AP used more or less the same 2121 JLC-derived movement from the get-go for 50 years, and the 16202 is the first to use this completely new calibre. Still a two-hand watch, the new movement features a quick set date, finally!"

"After half a century of uninterrupted production, the Royal Oak is as relevant as any watch could be."

50th anniversary models

The first watch from 1972 was made in a run of 1,000 pieces. As the last of those pieces was sold, Audemars Piguet realised that another thousand would be needed.

These 2,000 watches were individually numbered and had a prefix 'A'; together they are known as the A series 5402. Inevitably, as demand soared, the B and C series followed. The 39mm steel so-called 'Jumbo' Royal Oak has been in production ever since, with the 5402 ending production in 1992 and being replaced by the reference 14802. In 2000, Audemars Piguet unveiled the reference 15202, which was tweaked in 2012 for the 40th anniversary. In 2022, with the legend having reached its half-century milestone, a new steel watch has been born in the reference 16202. The brand's Head of Complications, Michael Friedman, said at the launch: "I think the key is that we're celebrating the 50th anniversary by honouring the past but without a doubt we've planted seeds for the future as well. This anniversary year is [about] looking ahead as much as looking behind, and we're going to see these touchpoints throughout the whole collection."

The 16202 is available in four metals and dial colours: 18-carat pink-gold with a smoked grey dial; 18-carat yellow-gold with a smoked yellow-gold dial; 950 platinum with a sunburst-based smoked green dial; and, lastly, a tribute to the original Royal Oak, in stainless steel, with what the brand is calling a 'Bleu Nuit, Nuage 50' dial, which is the same shade of blue that was developed by dialmakers Stern for the 5402. While the hue of the dial is the same as the original watch, manufacturing advancements mean that the colour is achieved through a robust PVD coating that is both consistent and stable into the future. The original Royal Oak's dial colour was the result of each dial being soaked in a galvanic bath for a specific time and at a specific temperature to achieve the colour. This colour was then protected by a thin layer of varnish mixed with a few drops of black colour (No.50) that was applied to the dial to protect it. The term *nuage* refers to the cloud effect the black drop creates when it enters the protective liquid varnish.

After an admirable half-century innings, the original calibre 2121 movement is being retired to make way for the new calibre 7121. The 2121 is the date version of the 2120 that was first introduced in 1967 at an astonishing thickness of 2.45mm, with the 2121 measuring 3.05mm. This was by far the thinnest central-rotor automatic movement with date of its era. The movement is as versatile as it is thin, allowing the addition of complications such as the perpetual calendar movement, calibre 2120/2800.

One common thread and theme through the story of the Royal Oak is collaboration, and the new movement is also a result of great minds working together. Lucas Raggi, the Research and Development Director at Audemars Piguet, says: "Calibre 7121 has been constructed with the expertise of our engineers and watchmakers, specialised in both simple and complicated mechanisms. This cross-department collaboration resulted in the creation of a robust and powerful extra-thin self-winding movement that seamlessly fits in the slender architecture of the Royal Oak Jumbo case, paving the way for a new generation of in-house AP movements."

Side by side, the 7121 is certainly an upgrade on the 2121. The new kid on the block beats at a frequency of 4Hz, up from 2.75Hz, has a power reserve that clocks in at a minimum of 55 hours (up from the 2121's 40 hours), and, to the relief of all collectors, a quick set date. Finally, the 7121 has a special anniversary-edition openworked rotor in 22-carat gold, which features the '50 years' logo and the engraved Audemars Piguet signature. Of course, each anniversary model's 22-carat gold oscillating weights will be colour-matched to the case material.

After half a century of uninterrupted production and growing popularity — and of the sort in the past decade that even Golay, Genta et al couldn't have imagined — the Royal Oak is as relevant, richly diverse and highly sought after as any watch could be. Like all great recipes, it has been tweaked and riffed upon, but the message is, If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Leeny wears plaid single-breasted blazer and navy wool trousers, **Polo Ralph Lauren**; light blue linen shirt, **Emma Willis**.

Royal Oak Selfwinding, 37mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

Robertas wears chalkstripe suit and denim western shirt, **Brunello Cucinelli**; silk pocket-square, *stylist's own*.

Royal Oak Selfwinding Chronograph, 41mm, **Audemars Piguet**.

MODELS: ROBERTAS @ SELECT AND LEENY @ MILK
HAIR STYLIST: BRADY LEA @ PREMIER
MAKE-UP ARTIST: ANDREW DENTON AT PREMIER
PRODUCTION: NINA ALONSO

GETTY IMAGES

THE AXE FACTOR

For nearly a century the guitar has enabled modern music to exist in a permanent state of change. And from Stevie Ray Vaughan and Duane Allman to Hendrix and Marr, there has been no shortage of revolutionaries. By **JAMES MEDD.**

Stevie Ray Vaughan performs in New York in 1983.

Before the guitar hero, before even the concept of 'lead guitar', there was Robert Johnson. To say his playing is underestimated would be a stretch — this is, after all, the man who was said to have sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads in exchange for his talent. But what Johnson played was truly remarkable, even without considering that he did it first. For historians, he was the pioneer of the boogie shuffle, the blues pattern that led directly to rock 'n' roll, but that doesn't really matter. Listen to a collection of his very few recordings from the 1930s and you hear an incredible range of tone, played with perfect accomplishment and feeling: the exuberant vamping of *Sweet Home Chicago*, the shivering bottleneck plucking of Crossroad Blues, the tender melodiousness of *Come On in My Kitchen*. Perhaps the defining comment on his virtuosity is from Keith Richards, who asked on first hearing Johnson, "Who's the other guy playing with him?"

After Johnson, the electrified blues separated the role of vocalist and guitarist, focusing attention on the instrument and its player. The guitar hero began here, in the shape of Howlin' Wolf's Hubert Sumlin, whose clipped, urgent sound reinforced the power of his singer's growl, in the lyrical peals of B.B. King, the exuberant attack of Muddy Waters, or the sheer drama of Albert King, whose every perfectly placed note is a cry of desperation. While all of these players influenced rock, there was something about the last that translated to the guitar hero through the years, from Hendrix and Clapton in the sixties to a new generation in the eighties, and none of them more than Stevie Ray Vaughan.

This Texan native had played throughout the seventies, when blues was at the front of no one's mind, but in the next decade he almost single-handedly revived the form. Undeniably flashy, he was, however, a dedicated student, able to play anything and anyone, and bold enough to cover even Jimi Hendrix's *Voodoo Chile*. His cranked-up, hyperactive playing blew the dust off the blues and returned it to the living, breathing expression it had been before, all of life in full colour. He had the chops for the fans of hard-rock stunt guitarists like Eddie Van Halen, he had the traditional roots to please the blues purists, and he had the good fortune to come to the attention of David Bowie. Chosen as his lead guitarist for the *Let's Dance* album, Vaughan swathed a slick pop album in electrified blues and kickstarted his solo career.

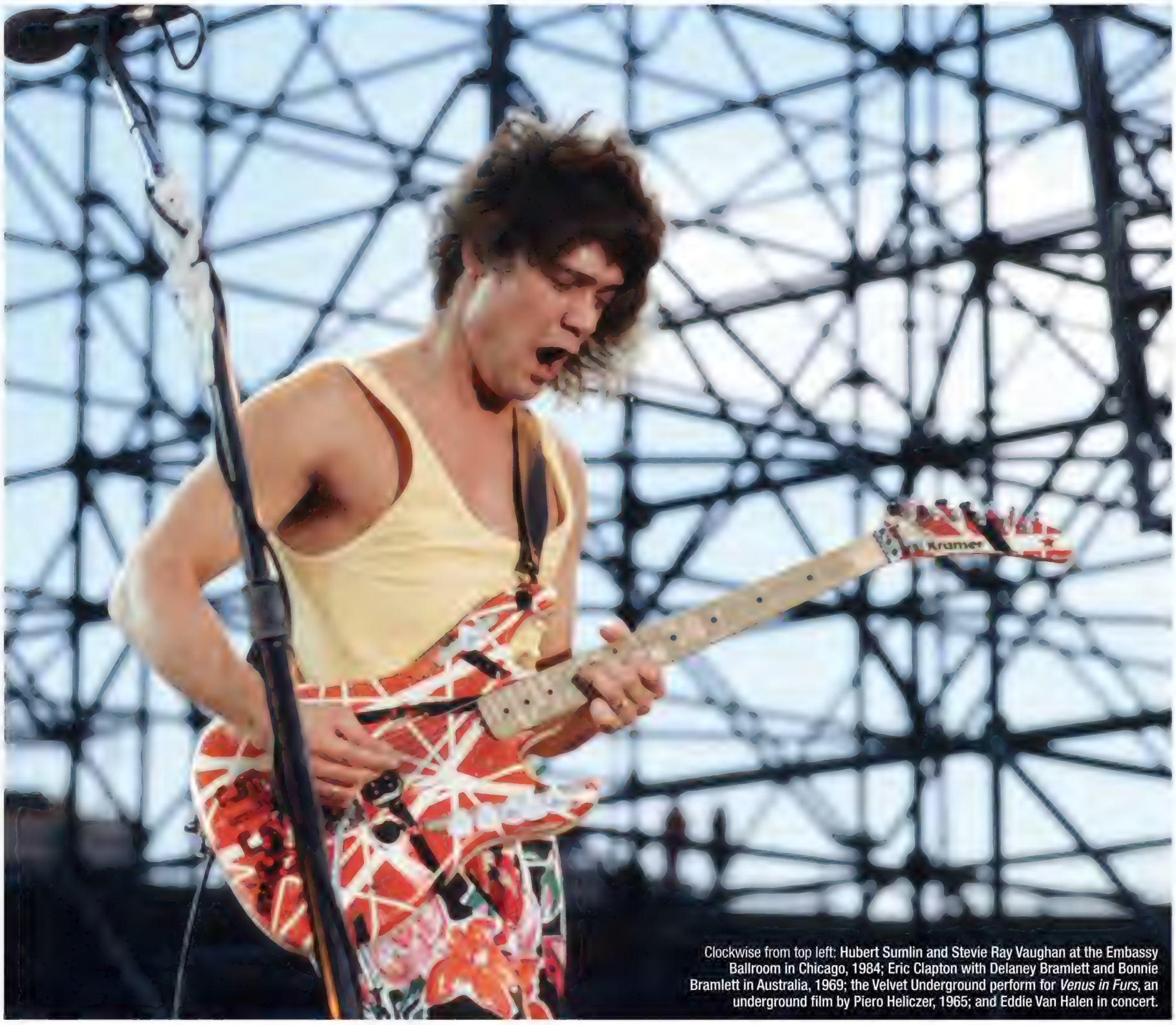
Much of Vaughan's reputation is in the might-have-been, however, as he died aged 35 in a helicopter crash in 1990. Another great white hope who left a small but perfectly played legacy was Duane Allman, taken at just 24 in a motorbike crash in 1971. Born in country capital Nashville but based in soul-land Georgia, his band, the Allman Brothers, took in not only the blues but also country and jazz, helping to create the southern rock sound that dominated music in the early 1970s. Allman's greatness is perhaps more remarkable since his most famous work was in tandem with other ludicrously talented guitarists: in his own band with Dickey Betts, whom Allman called "the good one", and with Eric Clapton in his Derek and the Dominos side project. The Dominos produced Allman's most famous lick, the opening to *Layla*, where his slide-guitar figure raises an already great song to another level, but his other work was equally inspired. There's the frenzied pair of solos on the band's live recording of *Whipping Post* that have gone into legend, but just as impressive is his pre-band outing as a session player on Wilson Pickett's *Hey Jude*, where in the final minute he breaks through the massed horns and the singer's hollering and lets loose, truly taking a sad song and making it better.

Clapton knew a great guitarist when he heard one, as shown also in his praise for an eighties legend. For most people, recognition of Prince's mastery came only after his death in 2016, when footage of a Rock & Roll Hall of Fame show 12 years before went viral. It showed him taking over a reverent all-star reading of George Harrison's *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* and blow it into another dimension with an impertinently flashy bout of soloing that incorporated slides, squeals, windmilling and knee-bends. Before then he had just been doing so many other things so well, as writer and performer and musician, and at such a pace, that no one had had time to notice his brilliance: his epic soloing on *Purple Rain* or the clipped riff of *Kiss* were magnificent, but then so were the completely guitar-free *Ballad of Dorothy Parker* and *If I Was Your Girlfriend*. Listen to *When Doves Cry*, and the near-atonal metal-shredding guitar is just one of about five elements that could grab your attention, every one of them performed by Prince. As a member of a band, he would have been worshipped for his playing; as pop's greatest Renaissance Man, he was cursed with the proverbial fate of Ginger Rogers, playing it all backwards and in heels.

Prince had been doing so many other things so well, no one had had time to notice his brilliance as a guitarist.

Similarly overlooked are those who excel at rhythm-guitar playing, whatever the genre. Lou Reed's ability to create a groove from three or four strummed chords and keep it fascinating, purely through feel, wrist action and repetition, was almost as magical as his songwriting. While his reputation was made with the avant-garde experiments of the Velvet Underground, he grew up on R&B, and its influence shone through in his playing. It's at the heart of later songs like *What Goes On*, *Rock & Roll* and *Sweet Jane* but just as much a part of *There She Goes Again* from his band's first album, as well as solo moments from the fuzzed-up glam-stomp of *Vicious* to the exquisite, languorous *Coney Island Baby*.

Equally as taken for granted is Nile Rodgers, whose clipped 'chucking' style of rhythm playing with Chic and Sister Sledge is surely one of the most joyful sounds in popular music. In tandem with the absurdly funky playing of his bassist partner Bernard Edwards, Rodgers created a hyperactive dance music where the two instruments were perfectly intertwined, as if taking it in turns



Clockwise from top left: **Hubert Sumlin and Stevie Ray Vaughan at the Embassy Ballroom in Chicago, 1984; Eric Clapton with Delaney Bramlett and Bonnie Bramlett in Australia, 1969; the Velvet Underground perform for *Venus in Furs*, an underground film by Piero Heliczer, 1965; and Eddie Van Halen in concert.**

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Clockwise from top: Dickey Betts and Duane Allman practise in a hotel room before an Allman Brothers performance in South Carolina, 1970; Iggy Pop and guitarist Ron Asheton perform with the Stooges in Detroit, 1970; Nile Rodgers, the Chic guitarist, at the Hammersmith Odeon in London in 1979; and Johnny Marr plays a Gibson Les Paul with Bigsby vibrato.

GETTY IMAGES

Prince plays Earl's Court in London in 1992

to assume the roles of rhythm and lead. Slinky and loose, driving the music on in the most laidback style possible, his playing is at its height on Chic's *Good Times* and *Le Freak* and Sister Sledge's *Lost in Music*, but it's still the backbone of the megahit *Get Lucky*, made with Daft Punk more than 30 years later.

One of Rodgers' least likely acolytes is Johnny Marr, another guitarist whose greatness lies in just about everything apart from soloing. From the opening seconds of his band the Smiths' second single, *This Charming Man*, a perfection of the jangly guitar sound of early eighties bands like Orange Juice, his talent was never in doubt, but his genius lay in his ability to absorb almost any style. There's the dreamy, folk-flavoured arpeggios of *Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others*, the spiky indie riff of *What Difference Does It Make*, the Bo Diddley-meets-swamp blues of *How Soon Is Now?*, the indie-funk of *The Boy with the Thorn in His Side*. Even on songs where his job might have been to strum the chords and stay out of the way of his collaborator, Morrissey, he inserted wonder and beauty: see the nursery-rhyme bounce of *Girlfriend in a Coma*, decorated with perfect delicacy, or *I Know It's Over*, where he heightens the drama with flurries of acoustic guitar and ratchets up the emotion with spare electric in the manner of a master film composer.

Marr remains revered but seldom imitated — in part, perhaps, because his trademark jangle is too distinctive and the rest too varied and diffuse to master. Greatness doesn't always have to involve virtuosity, of course. Sometimes with a guitar, the best thing to do is to play something incredibly simple and then play it again. Ron Asheton's brutal three-chord riff on the Stooges' *I Wanna Be Your Dog* could be mastered in a beginner's second lesson but is, for the three minutes and 12 seconds the song lasts, the best thing that's ever been played on a guitar. Likewise, Dave Davies' power-chord riff at the start of the Kinks' 1964 single *You Really Got Me*, which probably invented punk.

For all its stated opposition to the concept of virtuosity, punk rock had its guitar heroes, too. There was Johnny Thunders, whose sludgy Chuck Berry riffing, best heard on *Chinese Rocks* or *Born to Lose*, was the essence of attack and attitude. Then, at the other end of the scale, there was Television's Tom Verlaine, who, with fellow guitarist Richard Lloyd, alternated between gritty riffing and epically extended soloing. On the glorious title track of their album *Marquee Moon*, around half of the 10-minute running time is taken up with Verlaine's sonic exposition on the apocalyptic tone set by his lyrics, as if our man is embarking on an epic journey that ends on a distant shore with what sounds like the crying of seagulls. Almost 50 years later, it's just as breathtaking, and just as hard to imagine in a double-bill with the Ramones.

A generation on, when punk melded with heavy metal in the form of grunge, the guitar hero became a more straightforward proposition. Nirvana's Kurt Cobain was the star but the guitar genius of the era was J Mascis, of Dinosaur Jr. He progressed from creating a wall of noise to a kind of gonzo version of screeching metal histrionics, undercut by lyrics and a singing style that were the polar opposite of the expected bombast and aggression. On 1993's album *Where You Been*, the opening track, *Out There*, starts with a riff that might have graced a Black Sabbath cut, then launches straight into an extended solo, bringing headbanging to the irony-aware alternative crowd.

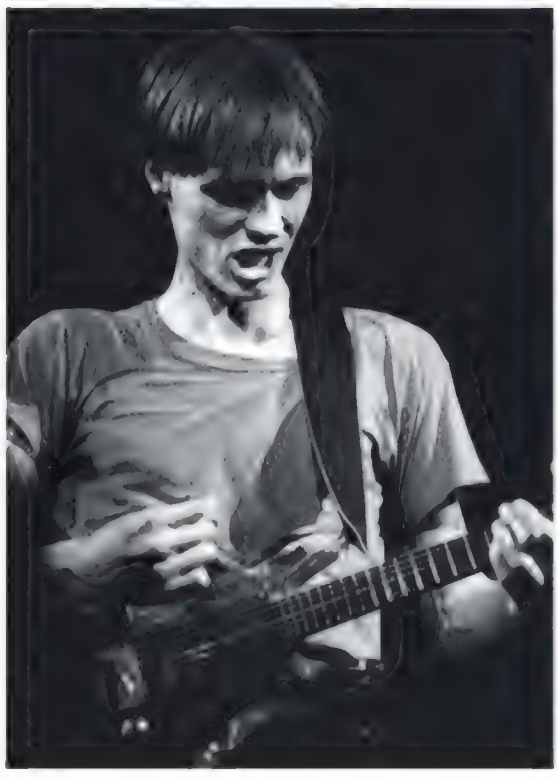
In between these two eras, though, the role of the guitarist had increasingly moved in the opposite direction, towards a kind of anti-guitar hero, drawn from the fringes of experimental rock. Of them all, perhaps the strangest is Robert Fripp, a guitarist who remains entirely indefinable, as much the architect of new wave as he was of prog-rock in his role as leader of King Crimson from the late sixties. Studious and theory-based to the point of intellectual coldness, he was also the creator of the waves of symphonic distortion that translate as pure emotion on David Bowie's *Heroes*. Bowie, a man whose ability to spot a great guitarist matched Eric Clapton's, re-employed Fripp to provide the wonderfully nightmarish cranking and rattling that pervades his *Scary Monsters* album.

When punk melded with heavy metal to form grunge, the guitar hero became a more straightforward proposition.

Fripp's approach — to ensure his guitar sounds as un-guitarish as possible — inspired a wave of eccentrics. Adrian Belew, another Bowie hire, is one: his C.V. includes jazz-rock maverick Frank Zappa and industrialists Nine Inch Nails, though his most extraordinary work was on Talking Heads' *Remain in Light* album, where his playing varies from unrestrained to berserk and, for a few glorious, unforgettable moments on the opening track, mimics the sound of dying electronics. From there, it's just steps to Jonny Greenwood of Radiohead, whose thrilling, crunching riff on breakthrough hit *Creep* was the herald to a career spent turning his guitar into something that would never again make such an obvious sound; or Nick Cave sideman Blixa Bargeld, who frequently declared his hatred of the guitar and turned it into an instrument of texture or torture depending on mood; or to Annie Clark, aka St. Vincent, whose jagged but perfectly fluid guitar lines are as joyfully unexpected as the numerous other things this latter-day Prince can do.

The ultimate child of Fripp, though, is surely Kevin Shields, of My Bloody Valentine. On their astonishing 1991 album, *Loveless*, he transformed the guitar into pure soundscape via the use of treatments and distortion. Still capable of the same extremes of aggression or delicacy, of working as a melodic or rhythmic instrument, distinctly not the same as a keyboard, it was as if he had taken all the capabilities of six strings and electricity to their extremes. Listening now, 30 years on, it sounds like a definitive statement, but then so does Robert Johnson.

Clockwise from top left: Johnny Thunders, circa 1973; the Kinks live in Birmingham, 1965; Kevin Shields, of My Bloody Valentine, during the 2009 All Points West festival in New Jersey; Jonny Greenwood, of Radiohead; Tom Verlaine, of Television, performs in London in 1977; and Robert Fripp, of King Crimson, in London in 1981.



GETTY IMAGES

HOBBITUARY: ANDY SERKIS

SCOTT HARPER *chats to one of the finest screen actors of his generation, and discovers a font of humanity beneath the motion-capture suit.*

photography **charlie gray** *fashion direction* **grace gilfeather**

special thanks to **Rosewood London**

Don't let that headline alarm you: there's plenty of life left in Andy Serkis, a man who has spent the past two decades inadvertently redefining screen acting. Not that he'll take any credit for doing so. "I think of myself as being like the lucky guy who gets to sit in a Formula One car and drive it while a million other people do all the work to get you into that seat," Serkis tells *The Rake*, his trademark cheery modesty coming across loud and clear via Zoom.

With the average Hollywood blockbuster film crew currently teetering at around 600, his intentionally hyperbolic analogy works for pretty much any major movie actor, though not quite as well as it works for Andy Serkis. Because Andy Serkis — in a role that has been described as the biggest technical advance in screen acting since *The Jazz Singer* brought synchronised sound to cinemagoers in 1927 — turned motion-capture acting into an art form. The personnel involved in Peter Jackson's Tolkien adaptations — Serkis's trackside engineers, mechanics, personal trainers and aerodynamics analysts, if you like — was a production team of more than 2,400 crew members, 26,000 extras, and all those involved in a supply chain when it comes to 48,000 pieces of armour, 10,000 arrows, 500 bows, 10,000 Orc heads and 19,000 costumes.

"I've now played a three-and-a-half-foot hobbit and a 25-foot gorilla... That was a real epiphany."

"I ended up talking to animators and visual effects artists, and they sort of became my family on *The Lord of the Rings* as much as the cast, in many respects," he says. "And that journey led to a fairly comprehensive understanding of this new technology. Then I went on to another project with Peter Jackson, *King Kong*. So I've now played a three-and-a-half-foot hobbit and a 25-foot gorilla. That was a real epiphany. It presents its own kind of learning curve, but I've always seen it as the most liberating tool for an actor in the 21st century because it allows you to transform into anything. It can be fantastical or it can be Scorsese using it in *The Irishman* and Joe Pesci being 20 years younger or 20 years older.

"The whole digital era has massively changed the way films can be made and the visions that directors can have, no question. But go back to Buster Keaton playing The General, or *King Kong* 1933, Ray Harryhausen and *Jason and the Argonauts* — these were all groundbreaking films at the time. What's happening now is an evolution of that sort of mentality — people constantly asking the question, 'What is the shortest distance between the imagination and actually seeing it up on screen?'"

Of course, for a man who crawled around on all fours for hours on end to prepare for the role of Gollum, diligence is still key when it comes to covering that shorter distance. He says: "I've never drawn a distinction between conventional onscreen acting and performance capture, because acting is acting — it doesn't matter whether you're wearing a costume, make-up or a motion-capture suit. You're playing the character and you're looking into other actors' eyes and creating a scene together which has an emotional heartbeat."

So enamoured is Serkis of digital-based filmmaking and its potential, he co-founded the London-based Imaginarium Productions with the English producer Jonathan Cavendish two years ago. One of Imaginarium's first projects (currently in pre-production) is a performance-capture film version of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, for Netflix. Directed by Serkis (who was also in the chair for 2017's *Breathe*, 2018's *Mowgli: Legend of the Jungle*, and 2021's *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*), the film is, he says, "an animation/performance-capture hybrid" in which "we're facially capturing all of the actors who are playing the characters". It's also, he says, a story whose telling has never been so timely. "Bizarrely, the film has become more relevant over the last 10 years than ever before," he says. "It's odd, in this industry, how things sort of grow into being the zeitgeist sometimes." Allegorising the emergence of Soviet communism, meanwhile, *Animal Farm* has a chilling resonance when considered in tandem with the actions of Russia's latter-day Stalin figure.

Another acting project in the pipeline for Serkis is a feature-length Netflix version of *Luther*, the filming of one outlandish scene of which has caused him to be grounded in Belgium, from where he's speaking to *The Rake* today. In *Luther* he will appear alongside Cynthia Erivo and, of course, Idris Elba. Serkis is mostly on people's minds right now, though, for his textured portrayal of a character previously channelled by Ralph Fiennes, Jeremy Irons and Michael Caine. For those who have not yet seen *The Batman* — which Serkis describes as "a standalone rather than a continuation or origin story" — you can expect a

Previous spread:
Brown herringbone wool overcoat, **Rubinacci**; burgundy cashmere long sleeve polo shirt, **Barbanera**; navy wool trousers, **Mr P. at Mr Porter**; black leather Kentmere boot, **Edward Green**.

This page:
Brown herringbone wool overcoat, **Rubinacci**; wool polo, vintage **Missoni**

Opposite:
Black wool cashmere overcoat, **Paul Smith**; navy knitted raglan cashmere sweatshirt and navy wool trousers, **Mr P. at Mr Porter**; burgundy paisley silk scarf, **New & Lingwood**; black leather Newmarket boot, **Edward Green**.

This page:
Black wool roll-neck, **John Smedley**; navy wool trousers, **Mr P. at Mr Porter**.

Spectacles, *Andy's own*.

"There's a precision to the way Alfred wears his cufflinks, his waistcoat. It is conscious. It's a uniform, a mask."

Camel cashmere coat, **Loro Piana**; green knit cotton polo neck, **Mr P. at Mr Porter.**

Black wool roll-neck, **John Smedley**; navy wool trousers, **Mr P. at Mr Porter**; red cotton socks, **London Sock Company**; black leather penny loafers, **Myrqvist**.

Spectacles, *Andy's own*.

slightly tetchier relationship between the Caped Crusader and his butler-slash-aide-de-camp, the latter of whom is played by Serkis. "I love what Matt [Reeves, most famous for the more recent episodes of the *Planet of the Apes* franchise] has written for this relationship. Because of where Matt chose to drop anchor with the story, Bruce is shunning and rejecting everything from his past, and Alfred is really part of the old order.

"He is a soldier who then went into the secret services and ends up as a security for the Wayne dynasty. And he's very proud of it in the way that security guards who have been with the royals for years and years have an incredible loyalty to the family. And actually, of course, he carries this terrible survivor's guilt, because he wasn't there at the moment Bruce's parents were assassinated. So he doesn't understand the messy world of emotions, but he's been drawn into it because his ward is self-destructing in front of him. He's like a teenager who's psychologically and physically harming himself, and he's powerless to save him from this journey.

"So it's a very complicated emotional bond they have, which has been torn apart, and Alfred also knows that he can't possibly be a surrogate father figure. He can't fill that void. He doesn't have that in him. But he can be a kind of mentor/uncle figure who can teach him skills, how to fight, how to crack codes, almost like doing Airfix models with your uncle. It's the only way they can really communicate."

Something *Rake* readers will notice in this portrayal of Alfred Pennyworth is his military precision when it comes to clothing. "[His impeccable dress sense] is his way of holding himself together," Serkis says. "It's very much in line with the military, and rule of law, and discipline. It's about discipline and precision. That's what he is. And that's how he manifests himself. There's a precision to the way he wears his cufflinks, his waistcoat. It is conscious. It's a uniform, a mask, a routine, and a way of getting through the day."

It's been some journey for Serkis, now in his late fifties, since he finished his visual arts and theatre studies at Lancaster University in the mid eighties and began a lengthy theatre and T.V. career that ultimately brought him to Jackson's attention. His appearance in various box-office alchemy over the years (a portrayal of Supreme Leader Snoke in the *Star Wars* sequel films is also on his C.V.) has put him in 10th place, just above compatriot Benedict Cumberbatch, in the league table of highest-grossing actors. Besides the phantasmagorical stuff involving cranes and cherry-pickers, make-up and mo-cap suits, he's played gritty real-life roles from murderers to new-wave punk rockers (Ians Brady and Dury, respectively) and has appeared alongside a who's who of the modern Hollywood A-listerati (although his favourite experience would seem to have been playing David Bowie's assistant in Christopher Nolan's 2006 mystery thriller, *The Prestige*: "David just had this wicked sense of humour about himself in this role, saying things like, 'I'm sure my Serbian accent just makes me sound like I'm in *'Allo 'Allo!*'").

He is in 10th place, just above Benedict Cumberbatch, in the league table of highest-grossing actors.

Yet he has a knack of giving you the impression his extraordinary career is subordinate to his life off camera. Jazz is a major obsession ("It just speaks to me"), as is climbing ("I find mountains incredibly spiritual — the tangibility of snow and ice and wind and the elements makes me feel very alive"). The parental support charity Serkis and his wife, fellow actor Lorraine Ashbourne, advocate and raise money for, Best Beginnings (BestBeginnings.org.uk), is another passion project.

All of these things, he says, inform his acting work: emotional life engagement being to acting what dribbling around traffic cones is to footballers. But perhaps the most potent ingredient in the mix that has made Andy Serkis one of the most expressive, wide-spectrum, nuanced film actors alive concerns his upbringing, which was split between Ruislip, on the western fringes of what is now Greater London, and Baghdad (his father was an Iraqi-Armenian who once built a civilian hospital in the Iraqi capital, a narrative Serkis would love to commit to film at some point). "I never felt I was from anywhere, and didn't really see that as a bonus until later on in life," he says. "Acting is basically learning to empathise and stand in someone else's shoes and see life through someone else's prism. I'm not saying, 'Woe is me!', but that sense of being outside of things, slightly, and observing — that allows a kind of emotional and cultural leap, which is great for acting."

Those of us who have observed a decent portion of Serkis's work are, by now, surely nodding in agreement.

A NARRATIVE SHIFT

Ralph Lauren returns with a collection inspired by the most prestigious historically Black colleges in the United States. His goal was nothing less than a drawing of 'a more complete and authentic portrait of the American dream'.

photography **danny kasirye** *by* **tom chamberlin**

all clothing **Polo Ralph Lauren exclusively for Morehouse College**

Rudyard Kipling said that, "If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten". Thank God, then, for Ralph Lauren, who has, in more than half a century, proved himself the master storyteller of our time, a man whose sartorial tapestry has broadened our capacity to connect with America's history and cultures. As our Founder, Wei Koh, said in *Very Ralph*, the HBO documentary on Lauren, "He finds beauty in every aspect of American culture, whether it be Native American, whether it be cowboy or Ivy League culture — he finds a nobility in each of them. Ralph Lauren democratised the whole idea of what was stylish, and that's the story of America."

The collection draws on the rich history, standards and legacy of these institutions, and re-examines the portrayal of the American dream.

This democratisation means no one can be left behind. The latest exploration of quintessential American culture comes in Lauren's new collection, which has been inspired by the two most prestigious historically Black colleges in America, Morehouse and Spelman. The collection draws on the rich history, standards and legacy of these institutions, and re-examines the portrayal of the American dream.

Conceptualised by Mr. Lauren and alumni of the colleges who work at the brand, the collection integrates the story of Black America into a more complete vision of the meaning of American style. "This collection expresses the spirited history, deep sense of community, and legacy of timeless dressing at historically Black colleges and universities," says Lauren, the Executive Chairman and Chief Creative Officer of Ralph Lauren Corporation. "It's so much more than a portrayal of a collegiate design sensibility. It's about sharing a more complete and authentic portrait of American style and of the American dream — ensuring stories of Black life and experiences are embedded in the inspiration and aspiration of our brand."

The aesthetic takes its lead from students who attended the colleges between the 1920s and 1950s, and includes everything from outerwear to tailoring and knitwear. It lingers on how the students dressed, and what that contributed to the traditions of the colleges. The implementation of the Ralph Lauren sartorial canon manages to feel both integral to the aesthetic as well as recognisable to the Ralph Lauren fanbase. Polo Bear sweaters, monogram cardigans, slick and well executed suits as well as outside-the-box designs such as the Norfolk jacket and breeks are the kind of idiosyncratic touches that are recognisable as expressions of Ralph Lauren and also in keeping with Morehouse College's ethos and heritage.

It is a masterpiece of narrative and design, a collection that tells a story, the story of America, and a history that shall not be forgotten.

M

DICTIONARY

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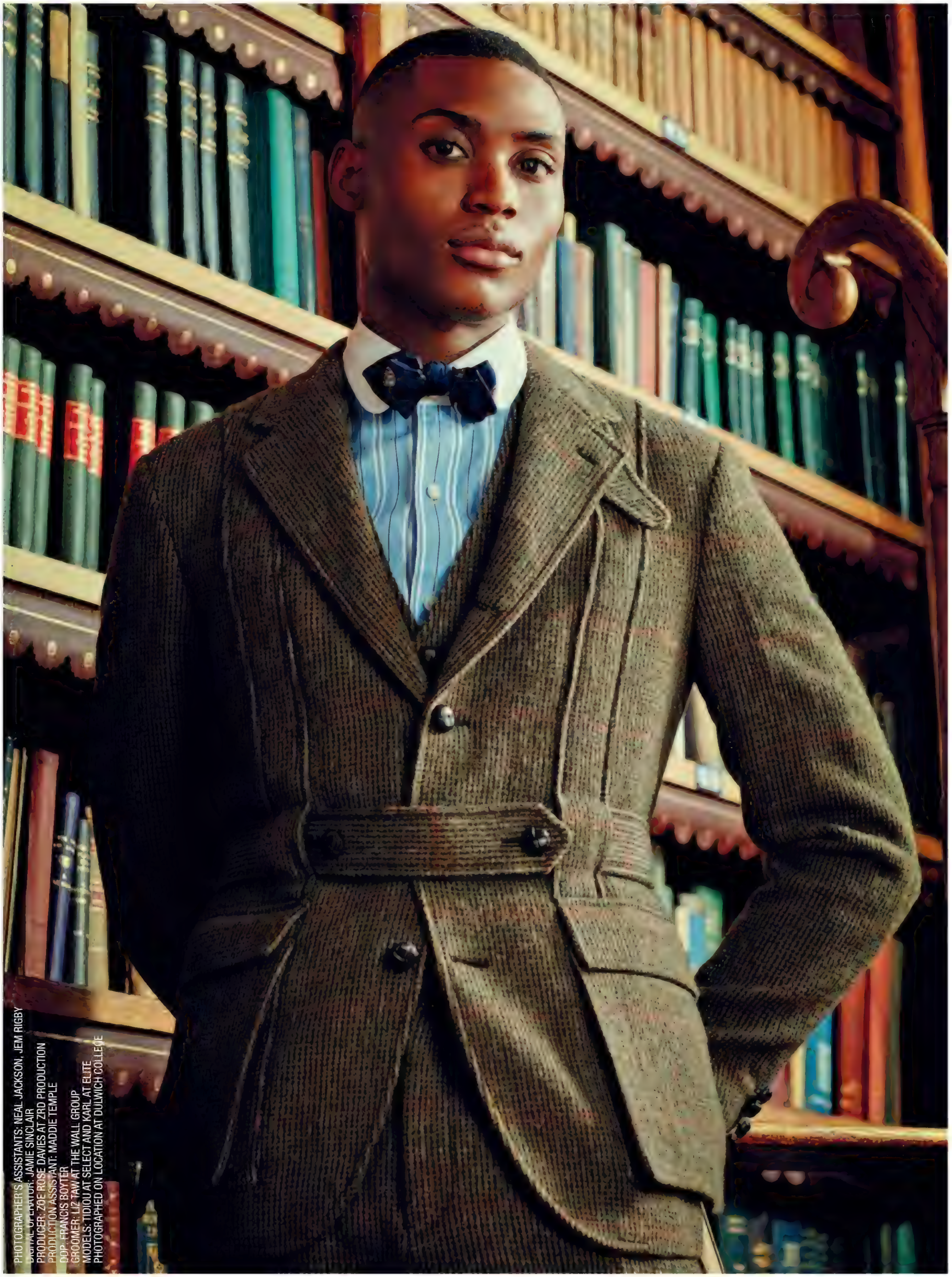


PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANTS: NEAL JACKSON, JEM RIGBY
DIGITAL OPERATOR: JAMIE SINCLAIR
PRODUCER: ZOE ROSE DAVIES AT ZRD PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: MADDIE TEMPLE
DOP: FRANCIS BOYTER
GROOMER: LIZ TAW AT THE WALL GROUP
MODELS: TIDIOU AT SELECT AND KARL AT ELITE
PHOTOGRAPHED ON LOCATION AT DULWICH COLLEGE

ME AND MY ROCK 'N' ROLL QUEEN

Is classic style the new rebellion?

photography **charlie gray** *fashion direction* **grace gilfeather**

special thanks to **Triumph motorcycles**

NEVER MIND
THE BOLLOCKS
SEX PISTOLS

Opening spread:
Betsy wears black silk slip dress, **Dagmar**; gold vintage necklace and earrings, **Susan Caplan**; watch, **Rolex**.

Sid wears silver skull bracelet and skull ring, **The Great Frog**; black denim jeans, **Frame**.

Opposite page, top:
Betsy wears silver embellished long sleeve mini dress, **Thom Laurence**.

Opposite page, bottom:
Betsy wears plaid long wool coat, **Banshee of Savile Row**; brown wool vest, **Herd**; grey wool trousers, **The Kooples**; tan suede platform boots, **Christian Louboutin**; Aftermath sunglasses, **Kirk Originals**.

Sid wears Hudson leather jacket, **Cromford Leather Co.**; wool crewneck jumper, **Sheep Inc**; black wool trousers, **Dolce & Gabbana**; Hays sunglasses, **Kirk Originals**; rings, **The Great Frog**.

This page:
Sid wears black single-breasted jacket, **Dolce & Gabbana**; watch, **Richard Mille**; rings and necklace, **The Great Frog**.

Sid wears Peacock silk dressing robe, **New & Lingwood**; light blue corduroy trousers, **Brunello Cucinelli**; jewellery, **The Great Frog**.

Betsy wears black lace bustier, **Dolce & Gabbana**; white denim jeans, **Frame**; vintage earrings and necklace, **Susan Caplan**.

Pink knit T-shirt, **Richard James**; white cotton trousers, **Canali**; tassel leather loafers, **Crockett & Jones**; jewellery, **The Great Frog**.

Betsy wears silk blouse, **Connolly**; jeans, **Frame**; earrings and necklace, **Pomellato**; belt, *stylist's own*.

Sid wears white cashmere polo, **Anderson & Sheppard**; RM 016 Automatic White Gold Medium Diamond Set watch, **Richard Mille**; jewellery, **The Great Frog**.

Britt wears black silk bustier and black denim shorts, **Dolce & Gabbana;** cross necklace, **Goossens.**

This page:
Print shirt, **Far Afield**; white cropped trousers, **Brunello Cucinelli**; jewellery, **The Great Frog**.

Opposite page:
Sid wears silver cocktail suit and black silk shirt, **Edward Sexton**; jewelled Cuban boots, **Dolce & Gabbana**; jewellery, **The Great Frog**.

Betsy wears blue wool suit, **The Deck**; heels courts, **Dolce & Gabbana**; trilby hat, **Borsalino**.

FASHION ASSISTANT: AMELIA HUDSON
MODELS: SID @ ELITE & BETSY @ NEXT
HAIR & MAKE-UP: NADIA ALTINBAS @ FRAME AGENCY

Sid wears vintage leather biker jacket, **Schott**; T-shirt, **Brunello Cucinelli**; black jeans, **Frame**; glasses, **Kirk Originals x Rolling Stones**.

Betsy wears black leather biker jacket, vest and jeans, **Dolce & Gabbana**; sunglasses, **Lanvin**.

compendium

CON BRIONI; **HEART OF CLASS;** HOTEL, CALIFORNIA; **LITTLE STAR.**

WISDOM

Mehdi Benabadji, the
Chief Executive of Brioni.

THE TALENTED MR. BENABADJI

Three-quarters of a century after Brioni were founded in Rome, the house offers a sartorial distillation of the Italian capital. How can the modern C.E.O. perform magic on gold? Over to Mehdi Benabadji...

by **scott harper**

If Rome has a soundtrack — and this being a music-themed issue of a magazine that has a soft spot for the Eternal City, it's an apposite point to consider — it might be considered Ottorino Respighi's Pini di Roma. Those in search of a cinematic tribute, of course, need look no further than Fellini's La Dolce Vita.

If it's a sartorial toast to the Italian capital you're after, though, look no further than a fashion house founded in 1945 by the master tailor Nazareno Fonticoli and his business partner Gaetano Savini, a luxury outfitter whose narrative milestones include holding the first ever men's fashion show (at the Sala Bianca of Palazzo Pitti in Florence, in 1952) and the pioneering of the prêt-à-couture concept seven years later.

The sartorial footprint Brioni have established along the way is chronicled with relish in the newly released book Brioni: Tailoring Legends. Written by the fashion historian Olivier Saillard and prefaced by the novelist Bret Easton Ellis, it charts how Brioni became the go-to provider of apparel for "Nobel Prize winners, rap stars and heads of state", to quote directly from its pages. The book, naturally, also explores a longstanding love affair with cinema, which culminated last year in a seven-piece capsule collection created in collaboration with Brad Pitt.

When Chief Executive Mehdi Benabadji joined Brioni at the start of 2020 — following stints at Louis Vuitton, Berluti and Hermès, as well as a period in marketing at Brioni as part of a longer tenure at its parent company, Kering — his mission was to irradiate the house's lustre during a challenging era.

We found Benabadji more than willing to expound on how he approaches the task.

It's always a pleasure to describe who we are, and to talk about sartorial excellence. That's why we decided to issue a book about tailoring excellence, heritage and, at the same time, unveil more about the house's very strong links with cinema and movie legends, which has been something quite unique to Brioni since the fifties.

Our relationship with cinema goes beyond Marcello Mastroianni's 'Roman-style' suits in La Dolce Vita. The whole Cinecittà Studios boom in Italy saw many very famous actors coming to Rome for those films, and they became Brioni customers.

Our latest campaign emphasises the authentic relationship that can exist between a father and a son. And Jude and Raff Law [who co-starred in the 2020 short *The Hat*] were perfect. What we wanted to do was create this connection with, on one side, the art of tailoring — our house is deeply rooted in sartorial excellence — but also the art of cinema and to have the brand represented by people who are at the top of their craft. They have the kind of friendship that goes beyond being father and son. They are like mates, and we tried to portray this camaraderie. During the shooting of the campaign, they were really elevating each other, like sparring partners.

Brioni style is not about age — there are no boundaries when it comes to being elegant and stylish, and we believe Jude and Raff perfectly represented, each of them, with his own personality and way of dressing, this urban elegance and the style that we try to convey every day to our customers. Each of them has their own personal twist in the way they wear the clothes.

"Our relationship with cinema goes beyond Marcello Mastroianni's 'Roman-style' suits in La Dolce Vita."

People want to feel at ease in their clothes more than ever. The pandemic has accelerated this. There is a new way of dressing even with suits, because now — particularly with menswear — it boils down to comfort, and Brioni has always really stood for comfort, for lightness. The 'Journey' suit, unveiled recently in Milan, which is more relaxed with an elastic waist, is so comfortable but still flattering, and the wearer still looks impeccable.

We like to say, You never feel our jackets on your shoulders. It's about looking good and feeling good simultaneously.

Joining Brioni as C.E.O. felt like a homecoming. I had already worked for the brand from 2012 to 2015, when it had just been acquired by Kering — I had the privilege to work on the acquisition process, and worked with the Brioni team to ensure they were well integrated into the group. My passion for this house never left me after those three years, and the passion I could feel in the team, when I came back, was very, very much the same.

Keeping an eye on the time is important, but we also have to always come back to the spirit we originated from: this Roman elegance that you can wear with a certain flair, a sense of freedom. [Design Director] Norbert Stumpfl's vision is rooted in talking to the modern man who is in the know in terms of quality and in the know in terms of true luxury and of sartorial excellence. So of course he is exploring this new way of dressing with creative versatility but also with no compromise when it comes to elegance. Norbert wants to promote elegance that does not shout, that imbues the wearer with relaxed confidence.

This page: **Brioni Bespoke, the ultimate personalised service.**

Opposite page: **Looks from Brioni's spring/summer 2022 collection.**

Most of our ambassadors have been famous actors who already dressed in Brioni. That goes right back to Clark Gable or John Wayne — we had the privilege of dressing them for specific occasions and events, and they became friends. Ambassadors have to have not only a very specific style, and enjoy being well dressed, but also the right personality.

Paying more, buying less, buying better? Yes, it is what people are increasingly looking for. And our customers are all about slow luxury over fast fashion.

The pandemic hasn't changed our vision — it's confirmed it, as well as the style we want to promote. And also the way we make and design our garments, which are conceived for longevity. [Our customers] have a real appreciation of artisanal crafts, of long-lasting quality, but at the same time they want to have modern cuts, perfect fits, comfort.

Leisurewear is something we have always offered, because we dress customers seven days a week. What Norbert does is bring this sartorial expertise into leisurewear pieces. But the same sartorial DNA exists throughout the collections.

No diploma could prepare business leaders for the pandemic — only life does. It was something completely unexpected. Reacting to it is, on one side, all about being resilient and, on the other side, about how you can adapt quickly. You have to accept and live with some kind of ambiguity and completely forget the idea of being in control of things. It's about the relationships with people that you're able to establish, how you move forward with your values and you try to inspire your team to this new challenge.

We want customers to feel like they're at home — that's the concept behind our 18th-century townhouse on Bruton Street [in Mayfair]. The idea was to have this house of a Roman man who brings not only his Roman style and taste in terms of design, but at the same moment who adapts to where he lives. Feeling at home in a store creates a connection.

We like to dress people in the comfort of their office or home to deliver the best service. The human touch is crucial because they trust us, and are very loyal.

One of the best pieces of advice I've ever had? Manage company funds like they are your own pocket-money.

My father advised me that no matter what path you choose, stick to your principles and you will make things happen.

I try not to compare myself to others. There are many people who are inspiring, but also human traits [can be inspiring]. Courage is something that really inspires me, as is integrity.

Kindness is far too rare, despite having no price. There is no stronger human trait than taking care of others and kindness.

Playing music with other people is the best escape. Finding the right balance, the right vibes with other people — it's such a joy. One of the most beautiful gifts I've ever received is a bass guitar that my whole team signed. That was a very emotional experience.

Passion is more important than talent — in any kind of artistic field.

PICTURE THIS ...

... a total portrait of Mrs Rake bringing back the glam after two years of sweatpants and slippers. Here's how.

by ***eleonor picciotto***

Debbie Harry was a cooler version of Marilyn. When she performed, she perched on five-inch leather waders and wore an asymmetrical top with cropped shorts or a stylish button-down shirt open at the top to reveal just enough cleavage to be sexy but not tacky. As clubs reopen and parties are started once more, Harry has inspired Mrs Rake to rock it in public.

1. A must: Adriana high-heel boots
Maison Skorpios was founded by the sublime Adriana Abascal, a 51-year-old Mexican-born model who participated in Miss Universe 30 years ago. Understanding what it feels like to walk on heels all day long, she wanted to create a brand whose shoes were designed the perfect way. The squared heels are thin, high and comfortable. The leather is soft, like a blend of cashmere and silk. The styles are timeless, elegant, and yet always worn with attitude.

2. A necessity: The Bespoke Dudes champagne sunglasses
The Bespoke Dudes is a sustainable Italian eyewear company founded in Milan. Their frames are made of bio-acetate from Mazzucchelli Varese, a leading acetate production company, and their cases of recycled cotton. The spectacles are unisex and handmade in Italy.

3. A basic: the Chloe shirt by DMN
Paule Yefet and her husband, Pascal, are the team behind the luxury collective DMN, which is taken from *demain*, the French word for 'tomorrow'. Together they have reinterpreted the classic button-down cotton shirt. The Chloe, with oversized sleeves, and the baby Chloe, its cropped version, both have the DMN lettering embroidered with silk thread.

4. An accessory: the Oris Big Crown Pointer Date
A good wine that ages well tastes far better over time ... and the same can be said of the Oris Big Crown Pointer Date watch. It is made of bronze, from the 40mm diameter case to the integrated bracelet, folding clasp and oversize crown. The bronze will age extremely well, reaching a vintage-looking patina within a couple of months if you manage to swim in saltwater fairly often. (We have a good recommendation for that: the Patina hotel in the Maldives.) The Bordeaux lacquer dial would be Mrs Rake's first choice ... if she's ever asked.

5. A statement: Tiffany & Co. link bracelet
The Tiffany City HardWear collection was unveiled in 2017, and took its link motif inspiration from a 1971 bracelet from the Tiffany archives. Chunky, bold and sometimes sparkled with diamond *pavage*, each piece is so arresting it is best worn alone.

MRS RAKE
GETTY IMAGES

MEET ME AT THE MAYBOURNE

Los Angeles has a new player in luxury hospitality — and not before time. **THE RAKE** *savours the style and charm of Maybourne Hotel Group's first North American property...*

by ***alessandra codinha***

If I'm being honest — as you always should be in matters as serious as relaxation — there aren't as many options for the luxurious shelter seeker in Los Angeles as you might think. There are lots of hotels, sure (an almost insane amount, actually, until you remember that L.A. is more like several cities in one). But places where you want to stay? Beds you want to lie in? Amenities you want to use? Neighbourhoods in which you want to stroll — and that won't keep you caught in traffic when you're trying to get where you need to go? In reality there's only a few. And of those happy few, let's be clear, many have seen better days, days they'll happily tell you about while charging you an eye-watering sum for a room whose interiors haven't been updated in 20 years. I say this with love, by the way. Hollywood is a town built on legends; a good story is half the battle. The Maybourne — Beverly Hills' newest arrival on the luxury hotel scene — does not have any local legends to point to. But when *The Rake* asked me to pay a visit, I was more than happy to discover that what it lacks in Gilded Age stardust it more than makes up for in taste, comfort and convenience.

What The Maybourne lacks in Gilded Age stardust it more than makes up for in taste, comfort and convenience.

Situated within Los Angeles' famous Golden Triangle — the upscale shopping district catering to local denizens and their tonier visitors — The Maybourne Beverly Hills is the first North American property from Maybourne Hotel Group, which you may know for some of London's more beloved stays: Claridge's, The Connaught and The Berkeley. Their newest hotel was owned and operated by Montage Hotels & Resorts until it changed hands to its merry new ownership in April 2020, and has only recently emerged from its full facelift. No shame in that, this being L.A., as long as the work is good, and I am happy to report that it takes all of two seconds to see how much it has been improved.

Pass the cortège of Lamborghinis, Ferraris and Bugattis parked outside and enter the calm marble lobby. On your left there is a jewel-box of a new bar, designed by the interiors whizz André Fu and centred around a bar carved from Turkish green onyx with polished nickel accents, over which they sling all manner of decadent cocktails. (Handmade sheer panelling by the French artisan Pietro Seminelli protects the not-so-innocent from any passerby.)

Back in the lobby, a few martinis the wiser, see which investments in the art world have particularly paid off: works by Damien Hirst, Petra Rös-Nickel and Harmony Korine are here, and 'The Mirror', a large Louise Bourgeois sculpture, alerts you to the elevators. Down a large open hall there's The Terrace, where you can find all-day seasonal California cuisine in a chic al fresco setting, or, inside, encircled by smoky blue leather banquettes perfect for both a raucous dinner party or an intimate tête-à-tête.

Upstairs, the rooms are flatteringly lit and uncluttered, even refreshingly neutral in concept. Some come with terraces and fireplaces and shelves of clever coffee table books with topics such as rare fonts, Danish furniture, and obscure visual artists. The furnishings are cozy, soft-edged contemporary designs, the kind that make you rethink your own couch and nightstands, if not your entire interior design scheme. Dedication to details is a through-line here: the minibar is packed with local delights, but we are not to be swayed by chocolates made with California cow's milk and pre-bottled tinctures that promise to protect our livers and immune systems alone! Pull open a drawer in the bathroom to reveal the world's best hairdryer, by Dyson, the insane one that costs £400 (ask the best-coiffed woman in your life, they will know what I'm talking about). Now, are we not convinced that someone has been paying attention?

And that was before we tried the spa, with its more than capable aestheticians and its plentiful private corners and enormous common spaces (including a prettily tiled hammam-ish pool) in which to rest and rejuvenate, alone or together. We hadn't even seen the saline rooftop pool, for hotel guests only, with private cabanas available, replete with televisions and mini-fridges and complimentary wifi, in case you realised you want to be outside without sacrificing a single amenity. Because why should you? You don't go to a hotel to be inconvenienced or, dare I say, uncomfortable. This is The Maybourne!

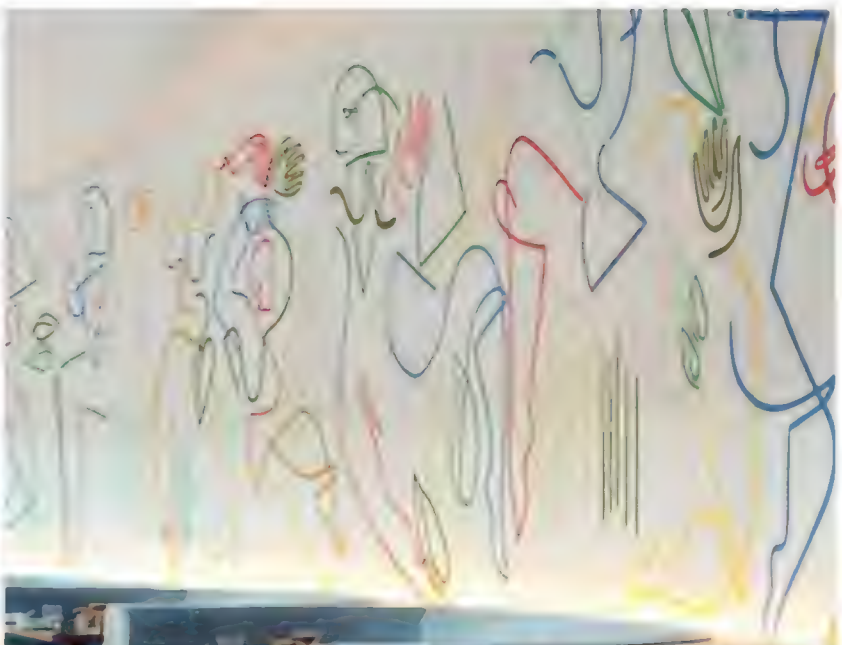
One more thing on that: the hotel's staff are warm, informed and impeccable. On our visit, your humble reviewer arrived with her Golden Retriever in tow. When I tell you that every staff member we encountered greeted this (admittedly spellbindingly handsome) hound by name and had a treat in their pocket — that there was a bed and bowls and an in-room multi-course doggie menu placed at his eye level — well, you'll understand why he's been ruined for other hotels. And why he drools every time we walk by.

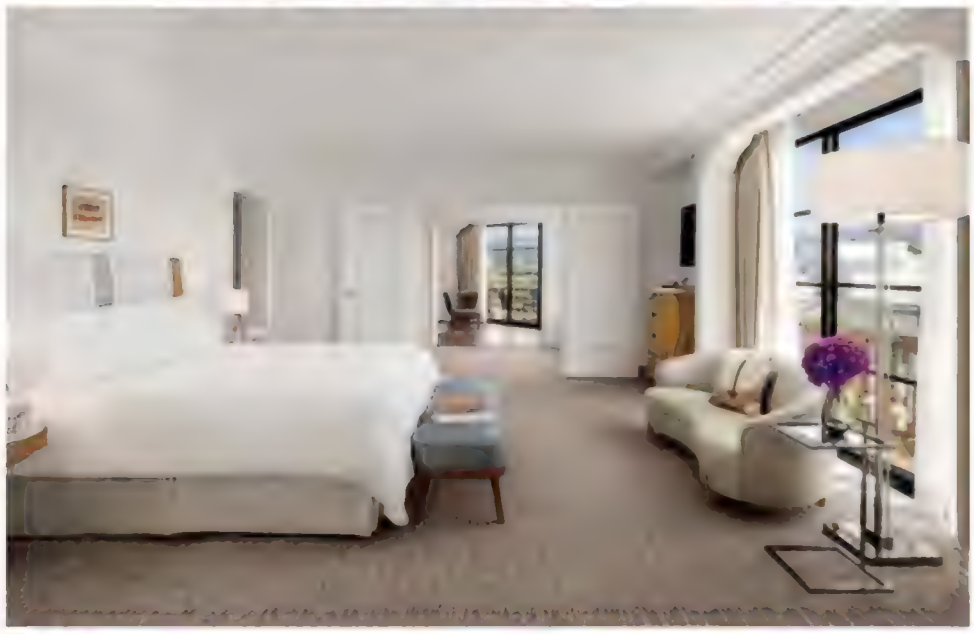
Truly, I can't blame him: when I think of the whisky flight from the Cigar and Whiskey Bar (styled after a speakeasy, and boasting probably the United States' most expensive collection of dark liquors, along with a very serious selection of cigars) we sampled later that night, I nearly do the same.

JAUNT

The Maybourne Beverly Hills

This page, clockwise from top: the Cigar and Whiskey Bar; the humidor in the Cigar and Whiskey Bar; the Maybourne Bar.





This page, clockwise from top left: A bedroom terrace; The Terrace restaurant; the Maybourne Café; the immersion pool at the spa; and a bedroom interior.

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BOO GEORGE

THE ART OF GENIUS

Mozart was puerile, potty mouthed and the most gifted classical composer in European history. He also possessed the trait that, according to John Stuart Mill, is linked to genius: eccentricity.

RAKE INCARNATE

by **scott harper**

The eccentric genius has become something of a boilerplate historical character, and with good reason. Pythagoras — who, as the man who showed humanity that natural phenomena can be explained mathematically, basically invented physics — thought that fava beans contained the malevolent souls of the dead. Albert Einstein, forbidden from smoking by his doctor, collected cigarette dog-ends from the street so he could fill his pipe on the quiet.

The chess prodigy Bobby Fischer had his fillings taken out, thinking it would prevent Russians from radio-signalling thoughts into his brain; Lord Byron overcame a dog ban by keeping a bear in his student digs at Cambridge; Nikola Tesla wouldn't touch anything spherical. The link has even been explained scientifically: geniuses are often schizotypal individuals, it turns out, who have reduced functioning of their cognitive filters, a process called latent inhibition. No doubt the white-coated fruitcake who nailed the condition believed his perspicacity had been beamed into his brain by the giant cosmic turtle on which the Earth balances.

W. A. Mozart.

Few of history's great geniuses, though, fulfil the eccentricity cliché as resoundingly as Joannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart. Packing a wealth of psychiatric disorders we now diagnose, he would pendulum-swing from dour impetuousness to glorious raucousness with wilful abandon. As well as dopamine and serotonin abnormalities, and possibly Tourette's, ADHD was certainly in the mix. The Austrian composer Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf once wrote: "He leaves his hearer out of breath, for hardly has he grasped one beautiful thought than another of greater fascination dispels the first, and this goes on throughout, so that in the end it is impossible to retain any one of these beautiful melodies."

Mozart was pathologically impulsive — he once proposed to Archduchess Marie Antoinette on the basis that she'd helped him up when he slipped on a polished floor — and, notwithstanding his borderline obsession with scatological humour (evidenced in 39 of 371 letters he wrote), the recipe for his psychological make-up didn't scrimp on humanity and sensitivity: on the death of his pet starling — which he first encountered in a pet shop in Vienna in 1784, supposedly chirping a movement from his Piano Concerto No.17 in G Major — he had mourners in veils march in procession and sing hymns, before he recited a poem he'd written for the occasion. (He'd failed to attend his own father's funeral the week before.)

As for the second part of the genius-eccentricity duality? Well, here the evidence boils over. By the time he was six, Mozart and his family (his father, Leopold Mozart, was a composer and music teacher at Salzburg cathedral) were performing at royal courts; he wrote his first five-part violin sonata aged eight, his first opera (*Apollo et Hyacinthus*) at 11; at 15 he claimed to be hearing whole operas "at home in my head"; and he had composed his first 30 symphonies by the age of 18. By the time he died, aged 35, probably of a streptococcal infection, he'd accomplished 600-plus musical works.

Mozart's grasp of complexly arranged sound was scholastic in nature: while visiting Rome aged 14, he heard Allegri's *Miserere* and transcribed it in musical notation later that day entirely from memory. But it was also visceral: clarity, structure, balance, transparency, pacing, and the interplay between delicacy and drama were all factors, whether he was composing opera or choral work, concerto or string quartet, symphony or sonata.

For a truly poetic description of his work, over to an unlikely but eloquent figure, the Swiss Calvinist theologian Karl Barth: "Mozart's music is free of all exaggeration, of all sharp breaks and contradictions. The sun shines but does not blind, does not burn or consume. Heaven arches over the Earth, but it does not weigh it down, it does not crush or devour it."

The bathetic gulf between the celestial majesty of his work and the occasional eyebrow-hiking banality of his sense of humour is epitomised in a canon he wrote at the age of 26. Its name — one requiring little translation — is *Leck Mich im Arsch*.

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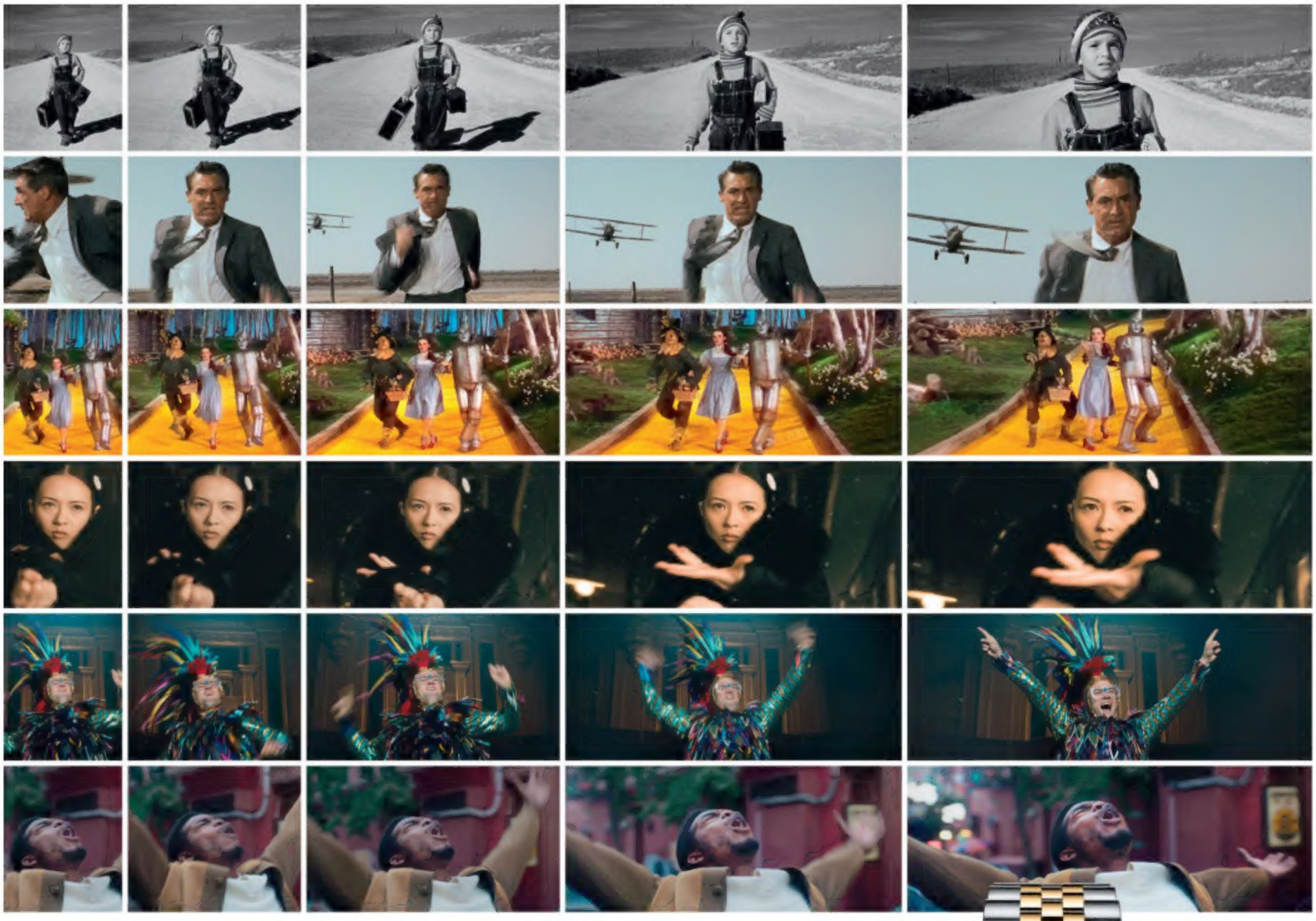

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